THE ORCHARD BOOKS

XIII: *The Scale of Perfection*

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THE SCALE OF PERFECTION

By

WALTER HILTON

Augustinian Canon of
Thurgarton Priory, Nottinghamshire

Modernised from the first printed edition of
WYNKYN DE WORDE, LONDON, 1494
By an Oblate of Solesmes

With an Introduction from the French of

DOM M. NOETINGER

Monk of Solesmes

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Scala Perfectionis* dates from the fourteenth century, and the modern reader may be inclined to object to some features of its arrangement, as well as to a certain leisureliness in the style, both of which things savour of the period of its composition. Let him not be discouraged, however, by these unessential details. He is not to expect a flood of eloquence, nor even a collection of pious considerations calculated to foster sensible devotion, for Hilton lays claim to none of these things. He has a higher aim in view. Expressing himself in a very simple, almost catechetical manner, in short chapters, reinforced by well-selected quotations from Holy Scripture, he lays down the main principles of a perfect life, at the same time placing it within reach of all souls of goodwill. He seeks only to be lucid, to encourage, and to convince. Practical before everything, he deliberately avoids hard terms, hyperbole or theoretical argument, and does not shrink from employing homely expressions for the sake of clearness.

Anyone who uses this book for the purpose for which it was intended, for instruction and self-improvement, will quickly discover its real value. Moreover, the lucidity of the style, the masterly fashion in which the English language, while yet in its infancy, is manipulated in order to give expression to abstract and psychological ideas, together with the gentle gravity of tone and the picturesque imagery which lend so much life and charm to his writings—all these win for Hilton a special place among masters of English prose, as well as among authorities on the interior life.

There is no doubt that it was by contact with the Fathers and Doctors of the Church that Hilton's mind and pen alike were trained. Even if the very peculiarities of his style and his use of the syllogistic method of explaining by question and answer did not show him to be a man well-versed in the arguments of the Schools, it would still be easy to recognise in him a theologian nourished upon tradition. In several manuscripts, too, he is spoken of as Master, a title at that time reserved for theological doctors, and one of them expressly calls him a doctor of the University of Paris, with which little or nothing in his ideas or opinions would be inconsistent. He well deserves the praise bestowed on him in the Harleian MS. (6579),

homo venerabilis scientia . . . composuit librum plenum catholica doctrina et aedificatione. It may be added that Hilton's opinions are, generally speaking, those of the Augustinians of Paris in the second half of the fourteenth century; while accepting much of Saint Thomas' doctrine, he still preserves a certain number of ideas peculiar to Saint Augustine. These last details are among the rare indications to be found regarding the life and person of our author. They are gleaned, like the rest of the information we possess, from the internal evidence of the manuscripts. Certain of these, and among them the oldest, were written in Yorkshire dialect; it is, therefore, supposed that Hilton himself must have been a native of that county, and a member of one of the noble families of the time. In this case he must have met with adversaries among his own kin, for Sir Reginald de Hilton was an ardent disciple of Wycliffe's notions. But although the argument from the manuscripts carries weight, it is not conclusive as to the writer's actual family, for the name Hilton was then common in England and especially in Yorkshire.

We learn at least from the copyists that Walter Hilton was a Canon Regular of Saint Augustine and spent part of his religious life at the Augustinian Priory of

Saint Peter at Thurgarton in Nottinghamshire, where he died, March 24, 1396. Apart from the evidence of a single manuscript in which he is styled *governor*, it would not seem that he was ever superior of his monastery; his name does not occur in the list of priors. Existing remains of the Pre-Reformation buildings show that Thurgarton possessed a dignified beauty fully worthy of the Order which raised Dorchester Abbey, and of the county which could boast of Southwell Minster among its religious houses.

Hilton was the author of other works besides the *Scala Perfectionis*. Among them are two small treatises generally considered authentic, which have been published—*e.g.*, *The Song of Angels* and the *Letter to a Devout Man of Secular Estate, teaching him how to lead a Spiritual Life therein*. Other of his writings remain unpublished, such as the *Letter on the Origin and Prerogatives of the Religious Life* and the *Treatise on Images against the Heretics*. Although it is not certain that all the writings ascribed to Hilton are from his own pen, the very fact of their being attributed to him proves that he was looked upon as the head of a School, and to such a one the works of his followers would commonly be assigned. He was famous enough to have been supposed the author

of the first three books of the *Imitation of Christ* when it was first current in England, under the title of the *Musica Ecclesiastica*, an idea which still finds supporters at the present day. But the likeness between the two works is sufficiently explained by the fact that they both deal with the same subjects and draw upon the same sources.

The date of Hilton's death calls for mention as showing that special interest attaches to the historical period covered by his lifetime. He lived under Edward III and Richard II, and although he did not survive until the latter's deposition in 1399, he must have seen the revolutionary movement which resulted in the taking of London by Wat Tyler in 1381, besides being one of Wycliffe's contemporaries. The *Scala Perfectionis* must have been written in the midst of the Hundred Years War, during the great Schism of the West, amid the general upheavals of thought and doctrine caused by the preaching of the Lollards, and still more by the popular risings, labourers' strikes and other conflicts, religious, political and social, which made this period one of the most turbulent and anxious in the whole of English history. Although all these troubles had not stifled faith and devotion in the nation at large, it must be admitted that the cultivation of mystical theology appears to have

met with scant encouragement in many of the older monasteries, preoccupied as they were with temporal concerns; and the same applies to the Mendicant Orders which were very prosperous at this time and much involved in worldly business. Driven out everywhere else, mysticism found a refuge with the solitaries who, whether living as hermits in the open country, or as recluses shut into some cell adjoining a church, still remained numerous in fourteenth-century England. The treatises compiled either by the anchorites themselves, or for their use, form a unique group of writings, and constitute what may be termed the School of English Fourteenth Century Mystics. It is to this school that Hilton belongs.

Although nothing warrants the supposition that he himself led the life of a solitary, he is evidently well acquainted with the needs and aspirations of such a state. His work is addressed to a recluse, and although nothing is known regarding her, it is unlikely that in this he was merely employing a literary device. She seems to have known the author well and could call his face to mind (Bk. I, chap. lxxxi). She is obliged by her rule to recite the Breviary (Bk. I, chap. xxvii), which was not generally the case among anchoresses. She is recommended to read the Holy Scriptures (Bk. I,

chap. xv), and she understands the psalms which she repeats; she must therefore have known Latin. These particulars justify us in believing that she belonged to some religious order. This was often the case, and many Benedictine Abbeys, for example, possessed cells—*reclusorium, anchoragium*—where those nuns retired who were eager for greater perfection and called to the solitary state. Another striking feature of Hilton's book may be noted in this connection. He presupposes a much higher moral tone, especially regarding temperance and chastity, than do the older rules written for the anchoresses. It is certain, however, that the *Scala Perfectionis* was not written solely for them, and when this is realised, its lofty spirituality becomes all the more remarkable. The circulation of such a work proves that the religious life of fourteenth-century England is not to be judged by the accounts of the satirists, nor yet by the invectives of Wycliffe, a conclusion which gains weight from a study of other writers belonging to the same school.

That the mystics present many features in common is beyond dispute, and to a certain extent they supplement and complete each other. Richard Rolle, the Hermit of Hampole († 1349), the first in order of date, is the most prolific of them all, but being

endowed with a remarkably original mind and great lyrical gifts, he gave rein to the impulse of his peculiar genius, and, even when he reasons or teaches, he hardly does more than present us with the reflection of his own temperament. Hilton draws largely upon his works and makes it clear that he does so, without, however, employing actual quotations, according to the usual medieval custom. In the same way he makes use of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the letters annexed to that treatise in the manuscripts—anonymous works dating from the middle of the fourteenth century, and perhaps the most daringly original of the writings of all this group of mystics, although they deal only with certain particular points regarding contemplation. Hilton knows how to give the pith of their doctrine while stripping it of everything that might appear too difficult, as, for instance, of the passages recalling Denys the Areopagite. Finally there exists so strong an affinity between Hilton's work and the Revelations of Dame Julian of Norwich that some have maintained that she must have read the *Scala Perfectionis*. This remains to be proved; we shall refer to the point later. In any case it is impossible to deny the close parallel in the spiritual outlook of the two writers—a parallel which frequently extends to the very language they

employ. But Hilton alone, among those enumerated, wrote a fully systematised treatise for the purpose of instruction, epitomising the age in which he lived, while borrowing whatever is best from the works of those who preceded him. Although he abstains from controversy and is content to place things in their just light by a sober exposition of the truth, he shows himself thoroughly acquainted with the mind of his age and carefully warns his readers against contemporary error. They are placed on their guard in this way, against the new notions disseminated by the Lollards, as well as against whatever is too personal in Richard Rolle. He strongly upholds the traditional principles of the old spirituality against the fierce attacks which were then being made upon them, and here he is quite in accordance with his predecessors including Rolle himself. He clearly envisages the new trend of religious thought to which Wycliffe had lent the support of his word, but which he did not create, for it is recognisable at a considerably earlier date, and was consolidated by later Protestant writers.

Hilton himself is as faithful to the old spirituality as he is submissive to the teaching of the Church. Beyond Richard Rolle, nay, beyond the masters of the School of Saint Victor who inspired him as well as all

his contemporaries—though he knew how to simplify their teaching—he reaches back to Saint Bernard, Saint Anselm, and the main stream of monastic spirituality which influenced England so profoundly down to the thirteenth century. Through the Anglo-Norman monks he is directly linked up with Saint Gregory, Saint Denys, Saint Augustine, and the Fathers of the Desert upon whom he was bred up, and whom he simply styles *the Fathers* when quoting from them. Hilton is indeed among the clearest witnesses in a great line of tradition, and it is not one of the least of his virtues to have presented the old spirituality in synthetic form just when it was being attacked and distorted. Well might Hilton's first publishers inform their readers at the conclusion of this treatise that the *Scala Perfectionis* contains notable teaching, worthy of all acceptance. It is not a question of Hilton's doctrine alone, but that of all Christian antiquity, of which he merely hands down the torch. The brief analysis of the work which follows will show this, as well as providing an opportunity of explaining certain aspects of Hilton's thought and style which may not be quite clear to his twentieth-century readers.

The *Scala Perfectionis*, as its title shows, treats of the means by which the soul is

led upwards towards perfection—*i.e.*, union with God. This union is only to be reached by charity. Such are the premises which the author assumes as known and unquestioned, and upon which therefore he does not enlarge. But all those who seek union with God do not follow the same path. Some manifest their charity chiefly in works of mercy towards their neighbour: whether corporal, such as caring for the poor or the sick, or spiritual, such as preaching or the charge of souls (Bk. I, chap. ii). Others, on the contrary, "for love of God forsake all worldly riches, worship, and outward business, and wholly give themselves, body and soul, after their might and cunning, to the service of God by ghostly occupation" (Bk. I, chap. iii). Those in the first category lead the active life, the second are contemplatives. Although Hilton describes rather than defines these two classes, he says enough to show that he is in entire agreement with the traditional teaching on the subject, as it is found, for instance, in Saint Thomas,* and thus he calls the active life one which is mainly devoted to external works, whether spiritual or corporal, and the contemplative that which has for its object the contemplation of divine truth.

However elementary these ideas may

* II^{da} II^{dae}, Q. CLXXIX—CLXXXII.

seem, they possess an importance in Hilton's teaching which must not be overlooked. He speaks of a life and a state (Bk. I, chaps. i, xvi), and for either a life or a state to exist, properly speaking, it is not enough to have a series of acts or even habits, for habits may be superficial and unproductive of any vital modification of character. It is necessary that the occupation which gives its name to the life or state should take the principal place therein, and that it should be set in relation to that occupation as to its aim and object. There must be a series of operations sufficiently important to control the whole field of activity and sufficiently habitual to become easy, natural, and even in some sort pleasurable. There must be frequent acts, but they must be mainly such as dispose the soul towards a given end. Doubtless this direction of spiritual activity is not strictly exclusive; an active soul may and can practise contemplation, a contemplative will have to perform some external works. But even so—and this is the constant teaching of the *Summa*—one of these two kinds of life must necessarily predominate and control the general tendency of every act performed. Hilton's mind on these points is quite unmistakable, and in order to understand it clearly, the word *life* must be taken in its fullest possible sense. He does not lose

time, moreover, in drawing comparisons between the two lives. Bent only upon pointing out the way of perfection to his followers, he begins at once to speak to them of that contemplative life which tradition has always recognised as the better and more meritorious of the two. He addresses himself to those who have turned wholly to God, renouncing all preoccupation with exterior objects. To lead them to their goal, he does not simply recommend pious practices or a method of prayer to his disciples; he offers them a particular kind of life, and herein lies the whole gist of his book.

Before proceeding to enunciate the laws of this mode of life, it is necessary first to describe its principal activity, that which gives it its name and determines its object. Here again our author does not disappoint us, for he devotes several very condensed chapters to this subject (Bk. I, chaps. iv-x). Once more it may prove useful to emphasise ideas which were quite familiar to devout persons of Hilton's age, but which stand out in striking contrast to the vagueness and inaccuracy of modern devotional terminology. When once it is liberated from the shackles of corporeal imagery—and Hilton places his readers on their guard against a type of metaphor so open to misconstruction—contemplation becomes essentially the

" simple act " of the Schoolmen, or, according to our author, " a knowledge and a viewing " of the intellect which is turned to God. It is, therefore, neither pious fervour (Bk. I, chaps. ix, lxxv; Bk. II, chap. xxix), nor a process of the imaginative faculty by which the scenes of our Lord's life, for example, are called up; for this last is the function of meditation (Bk. I, chaps. v, xxv). Nor is it to be confounded with certain sensible phenomena which may sometimes accompany it (Bk. I, chaps. x-xi; Bk. II, chap. xli). But, on the other hand, it would imply an utter misapprehension of the nature of Christian contemplation to make it an act of the intellect alone, and Hilton hastens to point out that the contemplation of learned men, exercised almost wholly through mental effort and by the light of reason, is in itself of no value and " tasteless as water " (Bk. I, chap. iv). It lacks one essential element, the supernatural. Setting aside, therefore, this first kind of contemplation, he distinguishes two other types according to the light by which the mind is enlightened, which we may call the second and third.

The third and highest kind " which . . . lieth both in cognition and in affection " is not strictly defined as extraordinary contemplation, the name it often bears to-day;

but, to use the more sober language of the *Scala*, it is the fruit of a special grace. It is an infused contemplation, and the soul illumined by the gifts of wisdom and understanding is uplifted by it to a knowledge of God and spiritual things. It is a grace of which God grants more or less, to whom He wills, but generally it is confined, especially in its fulness, to solitaries and to those leading the contemplative life (Bk. I, chaps. viii, ix).

As for the second kind it " lieth principally in affection without light of understanding of ghostly things," and is thus specifically distinguished from the third kind. Although it is equally a grace, and a great one, there is nothing intrinsically exceptional about it. In its lower forms it is bestowed on many souls, and even in its highest stages it can be regarded as the normal outcome of the contemplative life faithfully pursued, the usual consequence of a way of living sanctioned and organised by the Church and never barren of result for those who are called to it by God. It may indeed take on different aspects, presenting a diversity which has puzzled certain writers, but the same formal reason underlies them all; in all contemplation is practised by the light of faith (Bk. I, chaps. vi, xxv, xxvii, etc.).

Hilton condenses this preliminary analysis

of his subject, for he will have frequent occasion to revert to it throughout the remainder of his work. Later we shall find him characterising the deeper elements of that mystical life whose course of development does not always coincide with that of contemplation (Bk. I, chap. xcii; Bk. II, chaps. xxix, xxxi); here he contents himself with pointing out to the soul what she will verify by her own experience. As long as the intellect is exercised in the obscurity of faith, the soul will be especially sensible of the happiness, recollection, and devotion resulting from her adherence to God. Little by little the emotional part of this contemplation subsides (Bk. I, chap. xxxi); recollection increases together with the facility for keeping an ever closer hold upon God, and the soul makes her home in a higher region where she feels herself to be at peace and fortified against trials (Bk. I, chaps. vii, xxxi); in a word she may attain the highest stage in this second kind of contemplation, without, however, having experienced any extraordinary phenomenon. It is necessary to read the account of this gradual process in the text itself, noting wherein the second kind of contemplation differs from the third, to which, however, little by little it leads up and prepares the way. But, after placing them against each other in careful contrast, Hilton

seems, in the end, hardly to separate them at all, proposing both kinds simultaneously—though with some needful warnings—before the holy ambition of a soul sufficiently resolute to climb the ladder of perfection (Bk. I, chap. vii).

When once the goal is in sight, it becomes a question of knowing by what means it is to be reached. Contemplation is, indeed, a grace, but it is necessary that we, on our side, should place ourselves in favourable conditions to receive that grace and make good use of it. Otherwise we could not lay claim to the gift which would then come to be rightly described as extraordinary and exceptional in character (Bk. II, chap. xx). Hilton, therefore, goes on to teach us the conditions under which this preparation is to be made (Bk. I, chap. iii). The first of these belongs purely to the natural order and is one that was not unfamiliar to the Neo-Platonists. Hilton mentions it at the outset (Bk. I, chap. i), without, however, pausing to work out the point, since it was a condition already fulfilled by the recluse to whom he wrote. It consists in withdrawing as far as possible from outward occupations and preoccupations, and living in great tranquillity of body and mind (Bk. I, chap. vii). It is obvious that those who concern them-

selves with external matters, particularly if they do so at their own choice, run small chance of arriving at this habitual and lofty state of contemplation (Bk. I, chap. xxii and *passim*). To this first condition others are superadded. There are some practices, employments, and mortifications which dispose the soul to contemplation, and are therefore to be recommended in preference to certain others. Some among them form the very substance of our treatise, and will find mention or discussion below. It may be said at once that this discipline in view of contemplation, this precise adaptation of means to an end, is among the most original and successful portions of Hilton's ascetical teaching. Other requirements of a more general character are grouped together at the outset of the work (Bk. I, chaps. xiii-xxxvi). Among them are prayer and meditation, to which our author devotes what is quite a little treatise, on account of their importance in view of contemplation (Bk. I, chaps. xxiv-xxxvi).

Prayer, for Hilton, consists in raising the desire of his heart to God. It is a highly efficacious means of preparing for grace and being "cleansed by fire from desire." It makes us know our faults and helps us to correct them (Bk. I, chaps. xxiv, xxv). There are different degrees of prayer, and

Hilton mentions them all up to the very highest, at the same time concentrating upon what is needful for the instruction of a contemplative soul, without leading her into curious and fruitless investigations. All his own preference is evidently for the prayer which is inspired by the Church (Bk. I, chaps vii, xxvii; Bk. II, chap. xlii).

As for meditation, he is well-acquainted with its subject-matter; the vices and virtues, the truths of religion, the Humanity and Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ; but he does not make it either, on the one hand, an exercise for beginners, to be cast aside as soon as possible, or, on the other hand, the one unchangeable, fixed and final practice of all devout persons. In his eyes meditation runs parallel to prayer, but must on no account be substituted for it. Like Richard of Saint Victor, he wishes it to lead on to contemplation, and he does not advise anyone to dispense themselves from it at the beginning of their spiritual course, and without discretion (Bk. I, chap. xxviii). He also points out that it cannot be bound down under fixed rules, but must depend on the grace given to each one (Bk. I, chap. xxxiv). Again and again he insists upon the danger that lies in becoming fettered in one's spiritual progress by too close an attachment to one

type of devotional exercise (Bk. I, chap. xci; Bk. II, chap. xviii, etc.).

The account of these general dispositions is followed by advice on the difficulties to which beginners are exposed (Bk. I, chaps. xxxvii-xxxix), and this advice leads on by a natural transition to the purification of the soul and the acquirement of the virtues. This is, after all, the most important of all the works which prepare the soul for contemplation, since without it solitude, pious practices, and austerities would alike be worthless, while it can, in a measure, atone by itself for the want of them. This subject occupies the whole of the latter part of the first book (Bk. I, chaps. xl-xciii; *cf.* xiv, xcii).

The importance given by Hilton to this portion of his theme is more than justified; according to the word of the Gospel only the clean of heart shall see God (Bk. I, chap. xv; Bk. II, chaps. xi, xxxix). In many places also Hilton urges upon his disciples to devote themselves to all those practices both corporal and spiritual which may contribute to the perfect purification of the soul. It is not enough to have gained sufficient self-control to repress the passions and avoid exterior faults, nor even to practise the virtues courageously. This constitutes, indeed, an indispensable groundwork, to the absolute necessity of which Hilton is fully

alive, but he does not develop this part of his subject further. It is to be found, he says, in all books treating of the devout life (Bk. II, chap. xx). Moreover, he is addressing himself to a soul already trained. He insists rather on the necessity of mounting higher in order to avoid the risk of falling into a delusion which may prove fatal (Bk. I, chaps. li, lv, xcii; Bk. II, chaps, xx, xxxvi). The soul has entered upon her course with fervour; she practises religious observance and bodily mortification punctiliously; she performs acts of virtue with a certain heroism not wholly free from strain and over-emphasis; and then she believes herself to have *arrived* at the goal, or, at any rate, not to be far from it. But even if the revolts of the flesh cease for a time, and prayer becomes easy, or if, on the other hand, the soul believes herself favoured with particular lights, there is grave risk that she will be self-satisfied, and fulfil in a greater or less degree the description of a hypocrite (Bk. I, chap. lix), or an *illuminata* (Bk. II, chap. xxvi), so powerfully delineated for us by Hilton.

Even supposing that these dangers have been avoided, there must be no resting upon one's oars. These early achievements may possibly suffice for performing the works of the active life; one may nurse the sick, preach or teach, and that profitably, albeit

with passions incompletely mortified. But to obtain the grace of contemplation, it is necessary to mount higher, the ladder of perfection must be climbed; it is needful that the virtues should not merely exist "in the mind and in the will" (Bk. I, chap. xiv), but that they should have entered into the very temperament, so as to be really loved and practised joyfully and easily. And this is a long and difficult work, in view of which the soul must arm herself with courage (Bk. I, chap. xl; Bk. II, chap. xx). It involves nothing less indeed than the carrying out in ourselves of a radical reform, or, to give the word reform the full sense which it bears in the book, to make a fresh production or creation, to issue an entirely new edition of our *ego* (Bk. II, chap. xxviii).

The teaching of Hilton on this subject is only a development of that of Saint Paul (Bk. I, chaps. xlii, lxxxv; Bk. II, chap. xxxi). It is a fundamental doctrine with the Apostle and the basis of all his moral teaching, that we ought to transform ourselves and become a new creature (2 Cor. iv), putting off the old man and clothing ourselves with the new (Eph. iv); dying with Christ in order to rise again with him and live a new life (Rom. v 10-11). This absolute transformation is for him the essential condition for the attainment of the supernatural fulness which he

begs on his knees for his disciples from the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. iii-iv). Two passages from Scripture seem to have provided Hilton with the outline and heads of his treatise. In the first Saint Paul desires that, after having borne in ourselves the image of the earthly man, the first Adam, fallen and corrupt (1 Cor. xv), we should substitute for it the image of the heavenly man, our Saviour Jesus Christ. In the second passage, which occurs in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, he enumerates everything which we must put to death or cast away, and invites us to acquire the virtues of the new man in order to come to the full knowledge of God.

This is to be henceforth the sole theme of the *Scala Perfectionis* (cp. Bk. I, chap. xlii; Bk. II, chap. xxxi). The end of the first book deals with the work of mortification, the destruction of everything connected with fallen man, the "image of sin" and its members (Bk. I, chap. lxxxv); the second book teaches us how to form anew in ourselves the "image of our Lord." In actual fact, the constructive work is inseparable from the destructive, and although he distinguishes them for the sake of clearness, Hilton does not make any practical severance between them. Indeed, it would be truer to say that he reinstates them in the position

which they commonly held under the older mystical system. In order to cleanse and detach the soul, he begins by gathering her within herself; then, to foster her growth, he raises her above herself, up to Almighty God: *Ab exterioribus ad interiora ; ab interioribus ad superiora.* In order to destroy " the image of sin " in the soul, it is necessary to enter into ourselves (Bk. I, chaps. xlii, lii) and to learn to recognise the evil tendencies which lie concealed at the bottom of our hearts. Hilton will make this examination of conscience with his reader (Bk. I, chaps. lvi-lxxii), but it is the way in which he carries out his analysis, even more than his account of the seven deadly sins and their deep roots in ourselves, which demands all our attention. Contemplative souls—and with them many active spirits also—are only too prone to introspection. They must be taught to know themselves and to be watchful, but they must not be encouraged in endless self-analysis. Hilton insists upon this point, and conducts his study of the *ego* in such a way as to teach the soul how to escape from and go beyond herself. To achieve this he turns her very early in her course directly to God. Following the doctrine so frequently met with in the teaching of the Fathers, he reminds us that we have been created in the image and likeness of the

sacred Trinity. The beauty and dignity with which the soul was clothed, and from which she has fallen by sin, are contrasted with her present state, and, confronted with the picture of her own deformity and wretchedness, she desires to win back what she has lost. Hilton shows her that she can recover it only in Jesus and by Jesus. It is towards Jesus that she must tend, and this tendency will be an encouragement, at the same time causing everything that hinders union with Him whom she seeks to stand out sharply in its true light, and thus aid her in knowing and correcting herself. This tending or aspiration towards God is thus a matter of great importance, and Hilton makes it the first step to be taken in the work of reform, devoting several chapters to it in this section of his book (Bk. I, chaps. xliv-li). It is not so much a question of finding ourselves as of finding our Lord; we have to go forth from our egoism and turn wholeheartedly towards God. In spite of its having come down to us from the Middle Ages, and even from the Fathers of the Desert, this teaching has lost none of its force to-day.

Having set the soul in her true course, Hilton now makes her pass all her faults in review. True to his plan he does not dwell upon outwardly sinful acts, from which he

supposes his readers already freed; he insists rather upon those interior motions and evil tendencies which remain in the soul, often without her own knowledge. All these miseries are traceable to a common cause, to wit the deep root of pride, the inordinate love of self at which we strike a blow every time we seek after God (Bk. I, chaps. xlii-xliii). It is necessary to exterminate this root if we would destroy the image of sin. As long as we do not dry up this poisoned spring, our very virtues themselves will be imperfect and insufficient (Bk. I, chap. lv).

The end of the first book is devoted to this inward conflict for the destruction of the root of sin (Bk. I, chaps. lxxii-xciii). Since it is a wholly interior and spiritual struggle, the means for ensuring victory must be adapted to their end. To take purely exterior measures would be useless, at times even dangerous. Our author points out plainly what we have to do, but at the same time he does not fail to reckon with the part played by grace and divine action. He knows how to convince us of our own utter inability to accomplish this work by ourselves, and thus places us in a frame of mind essential for the contemplative (Bk. I, chaps. xxxiii, xliv, xlvii). Later on, in a series of short, closely-packed chapters, he shows us the means which we ourselves have to

employ. Space forbids our entering into a full account of them, as our present task is simply to facilitate the reading of the *Scala* and not to render it superfluous. One may note, however, the caution given here, not to proffer the whole of this teaching to active souls. Some of them would certainly be disconcerted by the exclusively spiritual nature of the methods suggested. Accustomed to external action, and the exigencies of such action, they are prevented from realising their own secret tendencies or attaching weight to them, and thus they may be inclined to find the weapons placed in their hands by Hilton altogether too light for their purpose. Who knows whether the aptitude to make use of such weapons, as well as the courage needed to bear without flinching the special suffering which they inflict (Bk. I, chap. lxxxix, etc.), be not a good criterion of suitability for the contemplative life? Almighty God will, nevertheless, provide active souls with other means of purification, incidental to the very course of their activity, provided only that they do not try to impose their methods upon contemplatives. These last are labouring to rectify a wrong attitude, as it were, in the soul, and they must be allowed to pursue the work of correction even though they may do so awkwardly at first. It is an undertaking

whose results will long remain invisible, since everything takes place in that secret region where the deepest springs of action have their rise. Time must be allowed for the truth thoroughly to penetrate the soul, and change its very axis so to speak. There is, in truth, only one means of doing this—viz., to replace self-love by the love of God. This is Hilton's doctrine (Bk. I, chaps. li, lxiii, lxviii, etc.), as well as Saint Augustine's. When once the image of sin has been recognised in us, the real way to destroy it is by creating the image of Jesus in our souls through charity.

Whoever has put into practice the teachings of the first book of the *Scala Perfectionis* will most undoubtedly have hastened the destruction of self-love through the growth of charity. But the second book goes on to point out a more excellent way, and leads us to the very summits of the supernatural life. This second book can be divided into three portions. The early chapters (Bk. II, chaps. i–xix) cover the Christian life, the foundation and starting-point of all the higher states which, after all, are only the outcome of the gifts and graces implanted in us by Baptism. Hilton, basing himself upon Saint Anselm, reminds us of the importance of faith and of the redemption in the supernatural life. He makes use of

the opportunity afforded by introducing these theological ideas in order to refute several of Wycliffe's errors which might otherwise disturb or confuse his readers. At the same time he gives them some very sound practical advice, pointing out the danger of halting by the way (Bk. II, chap. xviii), the obstacles and delays to be expected (Bk. II, chaps. xi, xviii), and, finally, the necessity of believing in grace which is neither seen nor felt (Bk. II, chaps. v, ix, xi).

But the author's main object in pausing to consider the state of beginners and those on the way is, undoubtedly, that he may compare and contrast it with the condition of perfect souls, of whom he is to speak henceforth. He lays stress upon the radical difference between the two categories in order to trace out a line of conduct for his readers. The Christian striving to cast off the old man and go to God is reformed in faith alone. If he mounts higher, he will arrive at what Hilton calls reform in faith and feeling, or, to use the modern expression, experimental union. This is, for him, the highest state which a soul can reach here below (Bk. II, chap. xvii), for it is only in heaven that faith will vanish into sight and give place to the fulness of experimental knowledge (Bk. II, chaps. iv, xxxii). In what does this higher reform consist?

Hilton characterises it, for the moment as it were, by its outward effects (Bk. II, chaps. v, xiii); but when, later on, he seeks actually to define it (Bk. II, chap. xxxi), he will find no better expression than the prayer for interior regeneration which Saint Paul addressed to the Christians of Colosse when tracing out that plan of the spiritual life by which Hilton was himself inspired. . . . "Being filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all understanding and spiritual wisdom." Like the Apostle he places before us as our object the full development of the highest spiritual gifts, and the perfect satisfying knowledge of God and the mystery of Christ, as it is engendered in the soul by the gift of wisdom.

But before proceeding to describe the state of perfect souls, it is necessary to indicate the means whereby this state can be reached, and this is the object of the second part of the book (Bk. II, chaps. xx-xxx). It is a question, as we have seen, of replacing self-love with the love of God. Self-love expresses itself mainly in two ways, pride and selfishness; everything depends, therefore, upon substituting for these two evil tendencies the two opposite virtues, humility and charity. To these our attention has already been directed throughout Hilton's work, and their successive degrees

form, as it were, the rungs of the ladder which the soul has to climb.

Humility consisted, first of all, in the recognition of our faults and weaknesses (Bk. I, chap. xvi; Bk. II, chap. xxxvii), and sometimes in the early stages it was needful that the will should intervene in order to compel the understanding to acknowledge our wretchedness (Bk. I, chap. xvii). But little by little, thanks to reflection, to our experiences (Bk. I, chap. xix), and especially to that " seeking after God " which Hilton has taught the soul to practise (Bk. I, chaps. xxii-xxiii), we arrive at a truer estimate of ourselves. It is this constant tending towards God which shows us, more clearly than anything else, what keeps us far from Him, and thus causes us to abjure all that hinders us (Bk. I, chap. xxiv, etc.). But this tendency mingles with desire, and desire is already charity (Bk. I, chap. xxii), and charity will exercise its transforming influence upon humility. It is not with impunity that we turn assiduously towards Infinite Beauty and Sovereign Truth; the more we do so the more we shall be convinced of our own impotence and nothingness (Bk. II, chap. xx). There will come a time when this conviction will grow into something joyful and ingrained in the character. Humility will have become the universal virtue, placing

us before God in a fitting attitude (Bk. II, chaps. xx, xxi, xxvii); "when we shall be annihilated before Him, then we shall be humble: humility is truth." This humility, looking to God rather than to self, will, in its turn, react upon our charity. The attitude of self-annihilation, or as one might say of adoration, which it causes us to assume, will avail nothing unless the soul places herself entirely in God's hands and yields herself to the divine action (Bk. II, chap. xxxvi). Then is love truly master and reigns in the soul: "The more a soul annihilates itself through grace by sight of this truth . . . the nearer it comes to receiving the gift of blessed love" (Bk. II, chap. xxxv).

These two virtues, which are the very livery of Christ, mutually complete and increase each other. Hilton epitomises their growth, and the movement towards God with which they stamp all our faculties, in the oft-repeated parable of the pilgrim journeying to Jerusalem, the city of contemplation, unarmed save for charity and humility, but, thanks to them, victorious over every obstacle (Bk. II, chaps. xxi-xxiii). But this should be read in the text itself.

It must be recognised, however, that the generous practice of these virtues involves a self-abnegation exactly proportioned to the loftiness of our aim. The ascent to God

presupposes the abandonment of all else but Him. The pilgrim who goes up to Jerusalem cannot attain the luminous peaks of contemplation except by passing through the dark night of self-immolation (Bk. II, chaps. xxiv-xxvii). Going up to Jerusalem; the Dark Night—these are very same expressions consecrated by Saint John of the Cross two centuries later. The likeness is not confined to words; the teaching of the two writers is identical, although their temperament and even their method is so utterly dissimilar. Even after having accomplished the work of purification described in the first book of the *Scale*, much yet remains to be done: having drained the source of evil, it becomes necessary to eliminate everything that is not God. We must learn to be indifferent to all that proceeds from creatures (Bk. II, chap. xxii), to die to all, to be ready to live by blind faith, to cast aside all desire and all fear (Bk. II, chap. xxvii), to endure spiritual tribulation even to abandonment and the temptation to despair, save only for "a little privy trust in God's mercy" (Bk. II, chap. xxviii).

But although Hilton regards these renunciations as the indispensable conditions of success, he endeavours to concentrate attention on the goal and does not wish us to dwell too much upon the inevitable suffer-

ings of the way. It is towards Jerusalem that we must constantly lift our eyes, even in the night, and indeed especially then; there is no better means of advancing than this. Moreover, he explains clearly that it is the special characteristic of these trials that rest and comfort must not be sought outside, and as it were beyond our renunciations. We ought to look upon them as final and know how to find interior joy in them; we must be at our ease in the very midst of them (Bk. II, chap. xxv). It is in the dark night itself that we must meet the light (Bk. II, chaps. xxiv, xxvi, xxvii). It is a question of winning our freedom, and this not by passing through a series of fleeting trials and temporary annoyances, after which the *ego* can reassert itself and expand once more. Our self-emptying must be complete, and the old man must die. Then, and then only, can we come into the haven of contemplation.

It is necessary to put our whole will into this work, and yet it is especially at this stage in the spiritual life that our own helplessness and the necessity for God's action comes out most strongly (Bk. II, chap. xx, xxviii). " We are an instrument, and it is God who works in us " (Bk. II, chap. xxiv). His grace alone can extinguish every alien affection in us " and the soul does not even

know how this destruction takes place" (Bk. II, chaps. xxvii, xxviii). But the needful grace will not be lacking to a generous soul, and step by step the work will be perfected. It only remains to describe the results of this transformation, and this is the object of the final section of the book (Bk. II, chaps. xxxi-xlvi).

Basing himself once more upon the authority of Saint Augustine, Hilton shows how it is that love gradually becomes the soul's chief motive power (Bk. II, chap. xxxv), acting without any intermediary and bringing about a purification far more perfect and fundamental than that which was achieved by the exercise of charity practised with joy and sweetness (Bk. I, chap. xiv). Our Lord, finding that the soul has become perfectly pliable, moves it by means of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost (Bk. II, chap. xxxv), and the development of these gifts, or at least the higher of them, constitutes what is almost a new series of steps for the soul to climb, at the same time cleansing her from the last remnants of evil. Then the inward eye of the soul opens, and "in that luminous darkness, of which the learned know nothing," she receives together with wisdom and understanding the gift of contemplation (Bk. II, chap. xl). Thus is accomplished that entire

conversion which Hilton made the object of his whole treatise at its very inception (Bk. I, chap. i).

The logical connection linking up every part of the work now appears very clearly. At times, indeed, it might seem that contemplation is set aside, while the subject of self-reformation occupies the whole field, but, in reality, Hilton has never ceased to set the soul forward towards her goal. That seeking and longing after God which he extols in so many pages, and the humility which of itself turns us to Him, are only preliminaries, or more truly forms of contemplation: and contemplation, like all other virtues, is the fruit of love (Bk. II, chap. xxxiv). The single eye, to give it its Gospel name (Luke xi 34), has made the whole body full of light, and the more the body is purified the better will the eye be able to pierce the clouds.

The final chapters have no need of any commentary. Yet this makes it all the more profitable to note the precision, and above all the sobriety with which the different degrees of union with God are described (Bk. II, chaps. xl-xlvi). As Dom Ephrem Guy remarks in the preface to his edition, Hilton chose to dwell longest at the halting-places of the spiritual life, or its transitional phases as they may be called, because in

them the soul has greater need of counsel and support. Here he gives us only what is needful for instruction and encouragement, without adding a single word which could provoke idle curiosity or foster a delusion. Even at the end, when he deals with the very highest states, he characterises them in a single stroke, then modestly retires and, instead of revelling in description, simply refers us to the "Teaching of the doctors" (Bk. II, chap. xlvi). This measured style, this discretion, in the full sense which the Fathers attached to the word, together with the simple, practical character of all he wrote and the masterly sureness of touch with which he describes contemplation and its counterfeits, implies in our author a perfect command of his subject. Hilton pretends in several passages that he is not speaking from personal experience (Bk. I, chaps. xiii, xciii; Bk. II, chap. xxi), but his book gives the lie to this humble assertion. Moreover, his contemporaries were not taken in by it. They have proclaimed his sanctity.

The success of what has been justly called the "Manual for Contemplatives" was great, and copies both of the original English and a contemporary Latin version were rapidly multiplied. The *Scala* seems to have been highly prized by the Carthusians,

but the solitaries were not alone in appreciating Hilton. In the middle of the fifteenth century Edward IV's mother caused his works to be read aloud at meals together with those of Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Bridget, and Saint Bonaventure. A little later, in 1494, the Lady Margaret, Henry VII's mother, made Wynkyn de Worde print "this heavenly book more precious than gold," and editions followed one another so rapidly that the eighth had already appeared by 1533. Even the Reformation did not put an end to these re-issues. In the seventeenth century Dom Augustine Baker, the famous Benedictine mystic, borrowed many points of his teaching from Hilton's treatise, and is said to have prepared the edition—published after his death by his disciple, Dom Serenus Cressy, in 1659—on which are based the modern editions of Dom Ephrem Guy (1869) and Father Dalgairns (1870).

The wide circulation of Hilton's book in such unpromising circumstances is not so surprising as would at first appear; neither is it in any way incompatible with his teaching on the exigencies of the contemplative life. Besides those living in conditions of peace and recollection, favourable to the exercise and development of contemplative gifts, there are always certain souls, perhaps more

numerous than is generally believed, to whom God has given the desire for this life, even though they are unable to leave the world. Such cases occurred in the fourteenth century as they do to-day, and Hilton knew them well. It was for such a soul that he wrote his " Letter to a Devout Man." It is addressed to one the duties of whose state kept him in the world, although he was possessed of a great longing for the contemplative life, and, at the same time as recommending him to fulfil the duties belonging to his condition, Hilton encourages him to persevere in his desire, and provides him with an epitome of advice corresponding to that developed in the *Scala*, exhorting him above all to tend towards God without allowing himself to be turned aside from his goal. The same advice may still be given to-day to all who are in the same case. They should not grow weary, but endeavour to establish themselves, as well as they can, in the conditions requisite for contemplation, while practising the virtues favourable to it, especially confidence and self-abnegation. Let them never cease to turn to God and long after Him. He who has given them these aptitudes and desires will only keep them waiting for their own good. He will justly show Himself severe towards those who wilfully neglect Him while dwelling in

the cloister (Bk. II, chap. xviii), but He will never repulse the souls who desire Him alone, whatever may be the circumstances in which He has placed them. Nay, He will Himself supply whatever is lacking to them, They must abide patiently till the second or third watch; God will not fail them. It may be that it will all happen without their knowledge, but the day will come when they will be recompensed for their long waiting. In the meantime let them seek help in the *Scala Perfectionis*.

To them just as truly as to religious enclosed in a monastery, to all those indeed who simply seek God and God alone, is addressed the wise and lofty teaching of him whom contemporaries called Venerable Walter Hilton. Upon such sound and consoling doctrine the soul will be well nourished.

Viae ejus viae pulchrae,
Et omnes semitae ejus pacificae.
(Prov. iii 17).

The Editor of the ORCHARD BOOKS desires to record his gratitude to the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Portsmouth, for the loan of his copy of the 1494 edition of the *Scale of Perfection;* to Dom M. Noetinger, for permission to use his valuable Introduction; and especially to the anonymous Oblate of Solesmes, who undertook the laborious task of modernising the "middle English" of the original, and of translating the Introduction from the French.

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION v

BOOK I

CHAPTER

1. That the inner state of man's soul should be like the outer 1
2. Of active life and the works thereof . 2
3. Of contemplative life and the works thereof 4
4. Of the first part of contemplation . . 5
5. Of the second part of contemplation . 7
6. Of the lower degree of the second part of contemplation 9
7. Of the higher degree of the second part of contemplation 10
8. Of the third part of contemplation . 11
9. Of the differing of the third part of contemplation from the second part, and of the praising thereof . . . 12
10. How the showing to the bodily wits and the feeling of them may be both good and evil 14
11. How you shall know whether the showing to the bodily wits and the feeling of them be good or evil 16
12. What knitteth Jesus to man's soul and what looseth him therefrom 19
13. How and in what things should a contemplative man be occupied . . 20
14. How in reason and will virtue beginneth, and in love and in liking it is made perfect 21

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
15.	Of the means that bring a soul to contemplation	22
16.	What a man should use and refuse by the virtue of meekness	24
17.	Who should blame men's defaults, and deem them, and who should not	28
18.	Why men should worship others and lower themselves in their own heart under all others	29
19.	How men should do that want the feeling of meekness in affection, not dreading too much therefore	31
20.	How hypocrites and heretics, for lacking of meekness, hold themselves high in their hearts above all others	32
21.	What things men ought to believe by a sure faith	36
22.	How a stable intention is needful to those that would please God, and discretion in bodily works	39
23.	Of a little rehearsing of things said before, and of making of offering that should be offered to God	41
24.	Of prayer that is speedful to get cleanness of heart and virtues	42
25.	How men should pray, and whereon the point of their thought should be set in prayer	43
26.	Of the fire of love	45
27.	That the certain prayer in speech ordained of God and of Holy Church is best for them that are newly turned to God and to devotion	45
28.	What peril it is to men that, in the beginning of their turning to God, leave too soon the common prayer of Holy Church and give themselves to meditation	48

CHAPTER PAGE

29. Of the second manner of prayer, that is in speech not certain, but followeth the stirring of devotion 49
30. That this second manner of prayer pleaseth God much, and maketh a man to behave him in body as he were drunken, and in soul to be wounded with the sword of love 50
31. How the fire of love wasteth all fleshly lusts, as other fire wasteth bodily things 52
32. Of the third manner of prayer, that is only in the heart without speech outward 53
33. How men should do that are travailed with vain thoughts in their prayers . . 55
34. Of meditation of sinful men after that they are wholly turned to God . . 58
35. That the meditation of the manhood of Christ or of His passion is given freely of the Holy Ghost, and how it shall be known when it is given . . 60
36. That the meditation of the passion of Christ is withdrawn from them that it is given to, ofttimes for divers causes . 63
37. Of divers temptations of the fiend. . 64
38. Of divers remedies against temptations of the fiend 66
39. How God suffereth them that He chooseth to be tarried and tempted, and afterwards comforteth them and stablisheth them in grace 69
40. That a man should not give himself to idleness, nor lightly leave the grace that is given him of God . . . 71
41. That a man should know the measure of his gift, that he may desire and take a better when God will give it . . . 72

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
42.	That a man should travail to know his own soul and the mights thereof, and break down the ground of sin therein	74
43.	How a man shall know the worthiness and the worship of his soul that he had first of God; and what wretchedness and mischief it is fallen into for sin	77
44.	How every man may be saved by the passion of Christ, be he never so wicked	79
45.	That a man should be busy to regain his worthiness, and reform again in himself the image of the Trinity	85
46.	How Jesus shall be sought, desired, and found	86
47.	What profit it is to have the desire of Jesus	89
48.	Where and with what thing Jesus shall be sought and found	91
49.	Where Jesus is lost and found again through his mercy	93
50.	What letteth a man from hearing and seeing Jesus within himself	95
51.	That meekness and charity are the special livery of Jesus, through the which man's soul is reformed to the likeness of Him	96
52.	How a man shall see the ground of sin within himself	97
53.	Unto what thing the image of sin is like, and what it is in itself	99
54.	Whoso will find Jesus, it behoveth him abidingly to travail in ghostly darkness against the image of sin	101
55.	What is properly the image of sin, and what cometh out thereof	102
56.	What pride is, and when it is sin	104

CHAPTER PAGE
57. When pride is deadly sin, and how it is in fleshly living men deadly sin . . 106
58. How pride is in heretics deadly sin . 108
59. How pride is in hypocrites deadly sin . 110
60. How stirrings of pride and vainglory in good men be but venial sins . . 112
61. How divers states in Holy Church shall have divers meeds in heaven; and of two special meeds in heaven . . 115
62. A short stirring to meekness and to charity 118
63. How a man shall know how much pride is in him 119
64. Of envy and of ire and of their branches; and how, instead of sin, man's person is often hated 121
65. That it is mastery to love men's persons and wisely hate their sins . . 122
66. That for the same deeds divers men shall have divers meeds . . . 124
67. That all men's good deeds shall be approved that have the likeness of good, save the open heretic and the cursed man . 125
68. That no good deed may make men safe without charity, and that they only that are meek feel charity . . . 126
69. How a man shall wit how much wrath and envy is hid in the ground of his heart . 129
70. By what tokens thou shalt know if thou lovest thine enemy, and what ensamples thou shalt take of Christ to love him . 130
71. How a man shall know how much covetousness is hid in his heart . . 135
72. How a man shall know when he sinneth not in eating and drinking, and when he sinneth venially, and when deadly . 139
73. How the ground of lechery should be destroyed with ghostly travail and not with bodily 143

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
74.	That a man should be busy to put away all stirrings of sin; but more busy of ghostly sins than of bodily	144
75.	That hunger and other bodily pains much let ghostly working	146
76.	What remedy a man shall use against default made in eating or drinking	147
77.	That through busy desire and travail for meekness and charity, a man cometh sooner to other virtues than by travail in himself	149
78.	Of the darkness of the image of sin, and what cometh in by the windows thereof	150
79.	That the soul for default of knowing of itself goeth out by five windows to seek outward liking	151
80.	That a soul should not beg without forth, but within of Jesus what it needeth	152
81.	That the hole of the imagination needeth to be stopped, as well as the windows of the wits	153
82.	When the use of the wits is deadly sin, and when venial	154
83.	How a ghostly man or woman shall behave to them that come to them	156
84.	Of the dark image of sin, and of the clothing thereof	159
85.	Which be the limbs of the image of sin	160
86.	Whereof the image of Jesus is made, and how we are passing forth in the image of sin	162
87.	How we should crucify the image of sin, and quicken the image of Jesus	163
88.	What profit cometh of keeping of the heart, and how much the soul is, and what it loveth	164

CHAPTER PAGE
89. How the image of sin shall be broken down 165
90. How a man shall behave him to the stirring of pride and of all other vices . . 167
91. What thing helpeth most a man's knowing, and getteth him that which he lacketh, and most destroyeth sin in him . . 169
92. How a man shall be shapen to the image of Jesus, and Jesus shapen in him . . 170
93. The cause why this book was made, and how she should behave her in reading thereof that it was made for . 172

BOOK II

1. That a man is the image of God after the soul and not after the body . . 175
2. How mankind needeth that, only through the passion of Christ, what was forshapen by the first sin should be restored and reformed . . . 177
3. That Jews and Paynims and also false Christian men are not reformed effectually through the virtue of the passion, through their own fault. . . 181
4. Of two manner of reforming of this image, one in fulness and another in faith . 184
5. That reforming in part is in two manners, one in faith and another in feeling . 188
6. That through the sacrament of baptism, that is grounded in the passion of Christ, this image is reformed from original sin 189

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
7.	That through the sacrament of penance, that standeth in contrition, confession and satisfaction, this image is reformed from actual sin	191
8.	How in the sacrament of baptism and of penance, through a privy unperceivable working of the Holy Ghost, this image is reformed though it be not seen nor felt .	195
9.	That we should believe steadfastly in the reforming of this image, if our conscience witness to us a full forsaking of sin and a true turning of our will to good living	198
10.	That all the souls that live meekly in the faith of Holy Church and have their faith quickened in love and charity are reformed by this sacrament, albeit that they may not feel the special gift of devotion or of ghostly feeling . .	199
11.	That souls that are reformed need ever to fight and strive against the stirring of sin while they live here: and how a soul may wit when it assenteth to the stirrings and when not . . .	204
12.	That this image is both fair and foul whiles it is in this life here, though it be reformed. And of diversity of feelings privily had between these souls that are reformed and other that are not	211
13.	Of three manner of men, of the which some be not reformed, and some be reformed only in faith, and some in faith and in feeling	215
14.	How men that be in sin forshape themselves into the likeness of divers beasts; and how they be called the lovers of the world	217

CHAPTER PAGE

15. How lovers of this world unable them in divers manners to the reforming of their own soul 221
16. A little counsel how lovers of this world should do, if they would be reformed in their soul before their parting hence . 225
17. That reforming in faith and in feeling may not suddenly be gotten, but by grace and much bodily and ghostly travail in length of time . . 228
18. The cause why so few souls, compared with the multitude of the others, come to this reforming in faith and in feeling 230
19. Another cause also of the same. And how wilful bodily customs indiscreetly regarded and used, sometimes hinder souls from feeling of more grace . 234
20. How without much bodily and ghostly business, and without much grace and meekness, souls may not be reformed in feeling, nor keep therein after they are come thereto 237
21. An entry how a soul that will come to this reforming shall have her in meaning and working, by example of a pilgrim going to Jerusalem; and of two manner of meekness 243
22. Of tarryings and temptations by their ghostly enemies that souls feel in their ghostly knowing and going to Jerusalem; and of remedies against them . 251
23. Of a general remedy against wicked stirrings and painful tarryings that fall to their hearts, of the flesh, of the world, and of the fiend 255
24. Of an evil day and a good night, and what it meaneth; and how the love of the

CHAPTER PAGE

world is likened to an evil day and the love of God to a good night . . . 258

25. How the desire of Jesus felt in this lightsome darkness slayeth all stirrings of sin, and enableth the soul to perceive ghostly lightnings from the heavenly Jerusalem that is Jesus 266

26. How a man shall know false illuminations feigned by the fiend from the true light of knowing that cometh out of Jerusalem; and by what tokens . . . 269

27. How great profit it is to the soul to be brought through grace into lightsome darkness, and how a man shall dispose him if he will come thereto . . . 275

28. That in reforming of a soul the working of our Lord Jesus is divided into four parts; that is, calling, righting, magnifying and glorifying 284

29. How it falleth sometimes that souls beginning and profiting in grace seem to have more love, as by outward tokens, than some have that be perfect; and yet it is not so in sooth within . . . 289

30. In what manner a man shall have knowing of his own soul; and how a man should set his love in Jesus, God and man, one Person 294

31. How this manner of speaking of reforming in feeling of a soul shall be taken, and on what wise it is reformed; and how it is found in St Paul's words . . . 304

32. How God openeth the inner eye of the soul to see Him, not all at once but by divers times. And of three manners of reforming of a soul by ensample . 307

33. How Jesus is heaven to the soul; and why He is called fire 312

CHAPTER PAGE

34. Of two manners of ove, reformed and unreformed, what it meaneth. And how we should be beholden to love Jesus much for our making, but more for our again-buying, and most of all for our saving through the gifts of His love . 316

35. How some souls love Jesus by bodily fervours, and by their own manly affections that be stirred by grace and by reason. And how some love Jesus more restfully, by ghostly affections only, stirred inwardly through special grace of the Holy Ghost . . . 323

36. That among all other gifts of Jesus the gift of love is worthiest and most profitable. And how Jesus doth all that is well done in His lovers only for love. And how love maketh the using of all virtues and of all good deeds light and easy . 328

37. How love, through gracious beholding of Jesus, slayeth all stirrings of pride, and maketh the soul to lose savour and delight in all earthly worship . . 333

38. How love slayeth all stirrings of wrath and envy softly, and reformeth in the soul the virtues of peace and patience and of perfect charity to his even-Christian, as he did specially in the apostles . 340

39. How love slayeth covetousness, lechery and gluttony, and slayeth the fleshly savour and delight in all the bodily wits, softly and easily, through a gracious beholding of Jesus . . . 344

40. What virtues and graces a soul receiveth through opening of the inner eye unto the gracious beholding of Jesus; and how it may not be got through man's travail only but through special grace and travail also 351

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
41.	How special grace in beholding of our Lord Jesus withdraweth sometimes from a soul. And how a soul shall behave her in the absence and presence of Jesus. And how a soul shall desire that the gracious presence of Jesus shall be in it always .	361
42.	A commendation of prayer offered to Jesus by a contemplative soul. And how stableness in prayer is a secure work to stand in. And how every feeling of grace in a chosen soul may be called Jesus, but the more cleaner the soul is, the worthier is the grace .	370
43.	How a soul, through opening of the ghostly eye, receiveth a gracious love able to understand holy writ: and how Jesus, that is hid in holy writ, showeth Himself to His lovers	377
44.	Of the privy voice of Jesus sounding in a soul, whereby it shall be known: and how all gracious illuminations made in a soul be called the speakings of Jesus .	385
45.	How through gracious opening of the ghostly eye a soul is made wise, meekly and soothfastly, to see the diversity of degrees in Holy Church as travailing, and to see the nature of angels. And first of fallen angels	389
46.	How by the same light of grace the blessed angels' nature may be seen. And how Jesus is God and man above all creatures, after that which the soul may see here .	393
	GLOSSARY	399

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THAT THE INNER STATE OF MAN'S SOUL SHOULD BE LIKE THE OUTER

GHOSTLY sister in Jesus Christ I pray thee that, in the calling in which our Lord hath called thee to His service, thou hold thee paid* and stand steadfastly therein; travailing busily with all the mights of thy soul by the grace of Jesus Christ to fulfil in soothfastness† of good living the state which thou hast taken in likeness and in seeming. And as thou hast forsaken the world, as it were a dead man turned to our Lord bodily in sight of men, right so let thine heart be as it were dead to all earthly loves and dreads, turned wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ. For wit thou well, a bodily turning to God without the heart following, is but a figure and a likeness of virtues and no soothfastness. Wherefore a wretched man or woman is he or she that leaveth the inward keeping of

* Paid—*i.e.*, content.
† Soothfastness—*i.e.*, truthfulness.

himself, and shapeth himself without only, in a form and likeness of holiness, in habit or clothing, in speech and in bodily works; beholding other men's deeds and deeming their faults, weening himself to be aught when he is right naught, and so beguiling himself. Do thou not so; but turn thy heart with thy body principally to God, and shape thee within to His likeness by meekness and charity and other ghostly virtues; for then art thou truly turned to Him. I say not that, on the first day, thou mayest so lightly be turned in thy soul by fulness of virtues, as thou mayest with thy body be enclosed in a house; but that thou shouldst know that the cause for thy bodily enclosing is that thou mayest the better come to a ghostly enclosing; and as thy body is enclosed from bodily conversation of men, right so thine heart may be enclosed from fleshly loves and dreads of all earthly things. And how thou mayest the better come thereto, I shall tell thee in this writing as methinketh.

CHAPTER II

OF ACTIVE LIFE AND THE WORKS THEREOF

THOU shalt understand that there are in Holy Church two manner of lives, as Saint Gregory saith, in the which Christian men shall be

saved. The one is called active and the other contemplative; without one of these two no man may be saved. Active life lieth in love and charity showed outwardly by good bodily works; in fulfilling of God's commandments and of the seven works of mercy, bodily and ghostly, to a man's even-Christian.* This life belongeth to all worldly men which have riches and plenty of goods to spend; and also to all others which have state, office, or care of other men, whether learned or lewd,† temporal or spiritual; and generally all worldly men are bound to fulfil it after their might and cunning as reason and discretion asketh. If he have much good, much good must he do; if he little have, he may do less; and if he have naught, then must he have a good will. These are works of active life, either bodily or ghostly. Also a great part of active life lieth in great bodily deeds which a man doth to himself, as great fasting, much waking, and other sharp penance-doing, to chastise the flesh with discretion for trespass beforedone, and by such penance to refrain the lusts and likings of it, and make him buxom‡ and ready to the will of the spirit. These works, though they be active, help

* Even-Christian—*i.e.*, fellow-Christian.
† Lewd—*i.e.*, ignorant.
‡ Buxom—*i.e.*, docile, obedient.

right much and ordain a man in the beginning to come to contemplative life, if they be used with discretion.

CHAPTER III

OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND THE WORKS THEREOF

CONTEMPLATIVE life lieth in perfect love and charity, felt inwardly by ghostly virtues and by soothfast knowing of God and ghostly things. This life belongeth specially to them which for the love of God forsake all worldly riches, worships,* and outward business, and wholly give themselves body and soul, after their might and cunning, to the service of God by ghostly occupation. Now then, since it is so that thy state asketh thee to be contemplative—for that is the intent of thy enclosing, that thou mayest more freely and entirely give thyself to ghostly occupation—therefore, it behoveth thee to be right busy both night and day, with travail of body and of spirit, to come to that life as nigh as thou mayest, by such means as thou hopest were best for thee.

Nevertheless, before I tell thee of the means, I shall tell thee first a little more of this life contemplative, that thou mayest

* Worships—*i.e.*, honours.

somewhat see what it is, and so set it as a mark in the sight of thy soul whereto thou shalt draw in all thine occupation.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE FIRST PART OF CONTEMPLATION

CONTEMPLATIVE life hath three parts. The first lieth in knowing of God and ghostly things gotten by reason, by teaching of man, and by study in holy writ, without ghostly affection and inward savour felt by the special gift of the Holy Ghost. This part of contemplation specially lettered men have and great clerks, which by long study and great travail in holy writ come to this knowing, more or less, after the subtlety of kindly* wit and continuance of study with the general wit that God giveth to every man that hath use of reason. This knowing is good, and it may be called a part of contemplation, inasmuch as it is a sight of soothfastness and a knowing of ghostly things. Nevertheless, it is but a shadow of very contemplation, for it hath not ghostly savour in God nor inward sweetness, the which no man may feel unless he be in great charity, for it is the proper well of our Lord to which cometh none alien. But this manner

* Kindly—*i.e.*, natural.

of knowing is common to good and bad, for it may be had without charity. And, therefore, it is not very contemplation; as oftimes hypocrites and fleshly living men have more such knowing than many other Christian men, and yet have these men no charity. Of this manner of knowing Saint Paul speaketh thus: *If I had full knowledge of all things and I knew all privities and I had not charity, I am right naught.** Nevertheless, if they that have this knowing keep themselves in meekness and in charity, and flee worldly and fleshly sins after their might, it is to them a good way and a great disposing to very contemplation, if they desire and pray devoutly after the grace of the Holy Ghost. Other men that have this cunning and turn it to pride and glory of themselves, or into covetousness, and desiring of worldly states, worships and riches, not meekly taking it to the praising of God, nor charitably spending it in the profit of their even-Christians, some of them fall into heresies and errors, or into other open sins by which they scandalise themselves and all Holy Church. Of this cunning Saint Paul saith, *Knowing alone lifteth up the heart unto pride; but mix it with charity and then turneth it into edification.*† This knowing alone is but water, unsavoury and cold; and, there-

* 1 Cor. xiii 2. † *Ibid.*

fore, if they that have it would but meekly offer it up to our Lord and pray Him of His grace, He would with His blessing turn the water into wine, as He did at the prayer of His mother at the feast of Architriclinus; that is to say He would turn the unsavoury knowing into wisdom, and the cold naked reason into ghostly light and burning love, by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER V

OF THE SECOND PART OF CONTEMPLATION

THE second part of contemplation lieth principally in affection without light of understanding of ghostly things; and this is commonly of simple and unlettered men which give themselves wholly to devotion. And this is felt on this manner. When man or woman in meditation of God, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, feeleth fervour of love and ghostly sweetness by the mind of Christ's passion or any of His works in His manhood; or feeleth a great trust in the goodness and in the mercy of God for the forgiveness of his sins and for His great gift of grace, or else a dread in his affection with great reverence of the privy dooms of God which he seeth not, and of His rightwiseness;* or when in prayer he feeleth the thought of

* Rightwiseness—*i.e.*, justice.

his heart draw up from all earthly things, strained together with all the mights* of it, ascending to our Lord by fervent desire and with ghostly delight; and nevertheless in that time he hath no open sight in understanding of ghostly things nor of privities of holy writ in special, but he thinketh only for the time that nothing liketh him so much as to pray and think as he doth, for savour, delight and comfort that he findeth therein; and yet he cannot tell what it is, but he feeleth it well for it is the gift of God. For out of it spring many sweet tears, burning desires and still mournings, which scour and cleanse the heart from all the filth of sin, and make it melt into wonderful sweetness of Jesus Christ, buxom, simple and ready to fulfil all God's will; insomuch that he thinketh that he maketh no charge† what becometh of himself so that God's will were fulfilled, with many such stirrings more than I can or may say. This feeling may not be had without great grace; and whoso hath it, for the time he is in charity; which charity may not be lost or lessened though the fervour of it pass away—save only by a deadly sin—and that is comfortable. This may be called the second part of contemplation; nevertheless, this part hath two degrees.

* Mights—*i.e.*, powers.
† Charge—*i.e.*, care, trouble.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE LOWER DEGREE OF THE SECOND PART OF CONTEMPLATION

THE lower degree of this feeling, men which are active may have by grace when they be visited by our Lord, as mightily and as fervently as they that give themselves wholly to contemplative life and have this gift. But this feeling in its fervour cometh not alway when a man would, nor lasteth it full long. It cometh and goeth as He will that giveth it, and, therefore, whoso hath it let him meek himself, and thank God and keep it privy—except it be to his confessor—and hold it as long as he may with discretion. And when it is withdrawn let him not dread too much, but stand sadly* in faith and in a meek hope, with patient abiding till it come again. This is a little tasting of the sweetness of the love of God, of which David saith in the psalter thus: *Taste ye and see the sweetness of our Lord.*†

* Sadly—*i.e.*, soberly, seriously.
† Ps. xxxiii 9.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE HIGHER DEGREE OF THE SECOND PART OF CONTEMPLATION

THE higher degree of this part of contemplation may not be had and holden, save by them which be in great rest of body and soul, who, by the grace of Jesus and long travail bodily and ghostly, feel a rest of heart and cleanness of conscience, so that they like nothing so much as to sit still in rest of body and always to pray to God and think on our Lord, and to think sometimes on the blessed name of Jesus which is comfortable and delectable to them, so that by the mind of it they feel themselves fed in their affection. And not only the Name but all other manner prayers, as the *Pater noster* and the *Ave*, and hymns or psalms and other devout sayings of Holy Church, are turned as it were to a ghostly mirth and sweet song, by which they are comforted and strengthened against all sins, and much relieved of bodily dis-ease.* Of this degree speaketh Saint Paul thus: *Be not drunken with wine, but be ye fulfilled of the Holy Ghost, singing to yourself in hymns and psalms and ghostly songs, singing and psalming in your hearts to our Lord.*† Whoso hath this grace,

* Dis-ease—*i.e.*, distress. † Eph. v 18, 19.

let him keep himself in lowness, and be ever desiring to come to more knowing and feeling of God, in the third part of contemplation.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE THIRD PART OF CONTEMPLATION

THE third part of contemplation, which is as perfect as it may be here, lieth both in cognition and in affection; that is to say in knowing and in perfect loving of God. And that is when a man's soul is first reformed by fulness of virtues to the image of Jesus; and after—when he is visited and taken in from all earthly and fleshly affections, from vain thoughts and imaginings of all bodily creatures, and as it were much ravished out of the bodily wits—then by the grace of the Holy Ghost is he illumined to see by understanding Soothfastness—which is God—and ghostly things, with a soft, sweet burning love in him, so fitly that he is ravished of his love: so that the soul is oned for the time and conformed to the image of the Trinity. The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the fulness of it is kept unto the bliss of heaven. Of this oneing and conforming to our Lord speaketh Saint Paul thus: *Whoso* by ravishing of love *is fastened to God, then God and*

*his soul are not two but both one.** And soothly in this oneing is the marriage made betwixt God and the soul, which shall never be broken.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE DIFFERING OF THE THIRD PART OF CONTEMPLATION FROM THE SECOND PART, AND OF THE PRAISING THEREOF.

THE other part may be called burning love in devotion, and this third part burning love in contemplation; that is lower, this is higher. That is sweeter to the bodily feeling, this better to the ghostly feeling. For it is more inward, more worthy, more ghostly, more wonderful. For this is verily a tasting—little though it is—and an earnest of the sight of heavenly joy, not clearly but half in darkness, which shall be fulfilled and openly cleared in the bliss of heaven, as Saint Paul saith: *We see now God by a mirror as it were in darkness, but in heaven shall we see openly face to face.*† This is the illumination of understanding in delights of loving, as David saith in the psalter: *My night is my light in my delight.*‡ The other part is milk for children, this is whole meat for perfect men which have wits assayed to know good from

* 1 Cor. vi 17. † 1 Cor. xiii 12.
‡ Ps. cxxxviii 11.

evil, as Saint Paul saith. The working of the full use of this gift may no man have unless he be first reformed by fulhead of virtues. Nor may any man living in deadly flesh have it continually in its fulness and in the overpassing, save at times when he is visited. And, as I conceive by the writing of holy men, it is a full short time, for soon after he falleth into a sobriety of bodily feeling. And all this work maketh charity. Thus, as I understand, saith Saint Paul of himself: *Whether we overpass our bodily wits to God in contemplation, or whether we are more sober to you in bodily feeling, the charity of Christ straineth us.** Of this part of contemplation and of reforming to God speaketh Saint Paul openly in the person of himself and of perfect men: *We, being first reformed by virtues and the face of our soul unsealed by opening of the ghostly eye, behold as in a mirror heavenly joy, full shaped and oned to the image of our Lord, from clarity of faith into clarity of understanding, or else from clarity of desire into clarity of blessed love.*† And all this is wrought of the spirit of our Lord in a man's soul, as Saint Paul saith. This part of contemplation God giveth where He will, to learned and to lewd, to men and to women, to those occupied in prelacy, and to solitary also. But it is

* 2 Cor. v 13, 14. † 2 Cor. iii 18.

special and not common, and though a man which all his life is active have the gift of it by a special grace, nevertheless the fulness of it may no man have, unless he be solitary and in life contemplative.

CHAPTER X

HOW THE SHOWING TO THE BODILY WITS AND THE FEELING OF THEM MAY BE BOTH GOOD AND EVIL

By this that I have said you may somewhat understand that visions or revelations of any manner of spirit, in bodily appearing or in imagining, sleeping or waking, or else any other feeling in the bodily wits* made as it were ghostly; either in sounding of ear, or savouring in the mouth, or smelling at the nose, or else any sensible heat, as it were fire glowing and warming the breast or any other part of the body, or any other thing that may be felt by bodily wit, though it be never so comfortable and liking, these are not very contemplation; nor are they aught but simple and secondary, though they be good in regard of ghostly virtues, and of this ghostly knowing and loving of God. For all such manner of feeling may be good, wrought by a good angel, or they

* Wits—*i.e*, the five senses.

may be deceivable, wrought by a wicked angel when he transfigureth himself into an angel of light. Wherefore, since they may be both good and evil, it seemeth well that they are not the best; for wit you well that the devil may, when he hath leave, feign in bodily feeling the likeness of the same things which a good angel may work. For right as a good angel cometh with light, so can the devil. And so is it also of the other wits. Whoso hath felt both, he would well tell which were good and which were evil; but he that never felt neither, or else but the one, may lightly be deceived. They are alike in the manner of outward feeling, but they are full divers within; and, therefore, they are not to be desired greatly, nor to be received lightly, unless a soul might by the spirit of discretion know the good from the evil that he were not beguiled. Saint John biddeth us that *we should not trust to every spirit, but we shall assay first whether he be of God or no.** Wherefore by one assay, I shall tell thee, as methinketh, how thou shalt know the good from evil.

* 1 John iv 1.

CHAPTER XI

HOW YOU SHALL KNOW WHETHER THE SHOWING TO THE BODILY WITS AND THE FEELING OF THEM BE GOOD OR EVIL

If it be so that thou see any manner of light or brightness with thy bodily eye, or in imagining, other than every man may see; or if thou hear any merry wonderful sounding with thy bodily ear, or in thy mouth any sweet sudden savour other than of kind, or any heat in thy breast as it were fire, or any manner of delight in any part of thy body, or if a spirit bodily appeareth unto thee, as it were an angel, to comfort thee and teach thee, or any such feeling which thou knowest well that it cometh not of thyself nor of any bodily creature, beware in that time or soon after, and wisely behold the stirring of thy heart. If thou be stirred because of the liking that thou feelest, to withdraw thine heart from the mind and the beholding of Jesus Christ and from ghostly occupation—as from prayer and thinking of thyself and thy defaults—from the inward desire of virtues and of ghostly knowing and feeling of God, to set the sight of thy heart and thy affection, thy delight and thy rest principally therein, weening that it should be a part of heavenly joy and of angels' bliss, and for

that thou thinkest that thou shouldest neither pray nor think naught else, but all wholly tend thereto, to keep it and delight thee therein, this feeling is suspect and of the enemy. And, therefore, though it be never so liking and so wonderful, refuse it and assent not thereto, for this is the sleight of the enemy. When he seeth a soul that would entirely give itself to ghostly occupation, he is wonderfully wroth; for he hateth nothing more than to see a soul in body of sin feel verily the savour of ghostly knowing and loving of God, which he himself without body of sin lost wilfully. And, therefore, if he may not let* him by open sins, he would hinder him by such vanity of bodily savours or sweetness in the wits, to bring a soul into ghostly pride and into a false secureness of himself, weening that he had thereby a feeling of heavenly joy, and that he were half in paradise for delight that he feeleth about him, when he is near at hell's gates; and so by pride and by presumption he may fall into other bodily or ghostly mischiefs.

Nevertheless if it be so that this manner of feeling let not thy heart from ghostly occupation, but maketh thee more devout, more fervent to pray and more wise to think ghostly thoughts, and though it be so that it astonish thee in the beginning, nevertheless

* Let—*i.e.*, hinder.

afterwards it turneth and quickeneth thy heart to more desire of virtues, and increaseth thy love more to God and thine even-Christian, and maketh thee also more meek in thine own sight; by these tokens mayest thou know that it is of God, made by the presence and the touching of a good angel, and that is of the goodness of God, either in comfort of simple and devout souls, to increase their trust and their desire to God, to seek thereby the knowing and love of God more perfectly for such a comfort, or else—if they be perfect that feel such delight—it seemeth that it is an earnest and, as it were, a shadow of the glorifying of the body which it shall have in the bliss of heaven. I wot not whether there be any such man living in earth. This privilege had Mary Magdalene, as it seemeth to my sight, in the time when she was alone in the cave thirty winters, and every day was borne up with angels, and was fed both body and soul by the presence of them, as we read in the story of her. Of this manner of assaying of working of spirits Saint John speaketh and teached in his epistle thus: *Every spirit that looseth or unknitteth Jesus, he is not of God.** These words may be understood in many manners; nevertheless, after one manner I may understand them to this purpose that I have said.

* 1 John iv 3.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT KNITTETH JESUS TO MAN'S SOUL AND WHAT LOOSETH HIM THEREFROM

THE knitting and the fastening of Jesus to a man's soul is by good will and great desire to Him only, to have Him and see Him in His bliss ghostly. The more that this desire is, the faster is Jesus knit to the soul: the less that this desire is, the looslier is He knit. What spirit or what feeling soever it be, which lesseneth this desire and would draw it down from the steadfast mind of Jesus Christ, and from the kindly stying to Jesus, this spirit—for that it will unknit Jesus from the soul—it is not of God, but is a working of the enemy. Nevertheless if a spirit or a feeling or a revelation make this desire more, knit the knots of love and devotion to Jesus faster, and openeth the eye of the soul into ghostly knowing more clearly, and maketh it more meek in itself; this spirit is of God. Here mayest thou see somewhat that thou shalt not suffer thy heart wilfully to rest, nor to delight wholly, in any bodily feeling of such manner of comforts or sweetnesses, though they were good; but thou shalt hold them in thy sight naught or little in regard*

* Regard—*i.e.*, comparison.

of ghostly desire and of steadfast thinking on Jesus, nor fasten the thought of thy heart overmuch on them.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW AND IN WHAT THINGS SHOULD A CONTEMPLATIVE MAN BE OCCUPIED

But thou shalt ever seek by great business in prayers that thou mayest come to the ghostly feeling of God; and that thou mayest know wisdom of God, the endless might of Him, the great goodness of Him in Himself and in His creatures; for this is contemplation, and that other is none. Thus saith Saint Paul: *Be ye rooted and grounded in charity, that ye may know*, he saith, neither sound of the ear nor sweet savour in the mouth, nor any such bodily thing, but that ye may know *and feel with all hallows, which is the length of the endless being of God, the breadth of the wonderful charity and the goodness of God, the height of the almighty majesty of Him and the groundless deepness of the wisdom of God.** In knowing and in ghostly feeling of these should be the occupation of a contemplative man, for in these may be understood the full knowing of all ghostly things. This occupation is that one thing which Saint

* Eph. iii 17-19.

Paul coveted, saying thus: *One thing is best for me to covet, and that is that I might forget all things which are behindward or backward, and I shall stretch out mine heart ever forward,** to feel and to grip the sovereign meed of the endless bliss. Hindward are all bodily things, forward are ghostly things; and therefore Saint Paul would forget all bodily things, and his own body also, that he may see ghostly things.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW IN REASON AND WILL VIRTUE BEGINNETH, AND IN LOVE AND IN LIKING IT IS MADE PERFECT

Now have I told thee a little of contemplation, what it should be; for this intent, that thou mayest know it and set it as a mark before the sight of thy soul, and desire all thy lifetime to come to any part of it by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the conforming of a soul to God, which may not be had unless it be first reformed by fulness of virtues turned into affection; and that is when a man loveth virtues, for that they be good in themselves.

There is many a man that hath virtue of lowness, patience, and charity to his even-Christian and such other, only in his reason

* Phil. iii 13, 14.

and will, and hath no ghostly delight nor love in them. For ofttimes he feeleth grouching, heaviness and bitterness to do them, yet nevertheless he doth them, by stirring of reason only for dread of God. This man hath virtues in reason and in will, but not love of them in his affection. But when—by grace of Jesus and by ghostly and bodily exercises—reason is turned into light, and will into love, then hath he virtues in affection: for he hath so well gnawed on the bitter bark of the nut that he hath broken it, and feedeth himself with the kernel. That is to say, the virtues which at first were heavy to do are now turned into a very delight and savour, as when a man liketh in meekness, in patience, in cleanness, in sobriety and in charity, as in any delights. Soothly, until these virtues be turned thus into affection, he may well have the second part of contemplation, but to the third soothfastly shall he not come.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE MEANS THAT BRING A SOUL TO CONTEMPLATION

Now since virtues are disposing to contemplation, therefore it behoveth thee to use certain means to come to virtues. Three

means there are, which men most commonly use that give themselves to contemplation: as reading of holy writ and holy teaching, ghostly meditation, and busy prayer with devotion. By meditation shalt thou see, as I said, thy wretchedness, thy sins and thy wickedness; as pride, covetousness, gluttony, sloth and lechery: wicked stirrings of envy, ire, hatred and melancholy: angriness, bitterness and unskilful* heaviness. Thou shalt also see thy heart full of vain shames and dreads of thy flesh and of the world. All these stirrings will always boil out of thy heart as water will run out of the spring of a stinking well, and let the sight of thy soul, that thou mayest never see nor feel clearly the love of Jesus Christ. For wit thou well that, till thy heart be much cleansed from such sins through stable troth,† and busy beholding of Christ's manhood, thou mayest not have ghostly knowing of God perfectly. Witness himself in the gospel, thus: *Blessed be clean of heart for they shall see God.*‡ Also in meditation thou shalt see virtues which be needful for you to have; as meekness, mildness, patience, righteousness, ghostly strength, temperance, cleanness, peace and soberness, faith, hope and charity. These virtues shalt thou see in meditation,

* Unskilful—*i.e.*, unreasonable; skill—*i.e.*, reason.
† Troth—*i.e.*, faith. ‡ Matt. v 8.

how good, how fair, how profitable they be; and by prayer thou shalt desire them and get them, without which thou shalt not be contemplative. For Job saith thus: *Thou shalt in plenty* of good bodily works and ghostly virtues *enter thy grave*,* that is thy rest in contemplation.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT A MAN SHOULD USE AND REFUSE BY THE VIRTUE OF MEEKNESS

Now if wisely thou shouldst use ghostly works and securely travail in them, it behoveth thee to begin right low. Three things thou needest to have first, upon which, as on a secure ground, thou shalt set all thy work. These three are meekness, secure faith, and whole intent to God. First it behoveth thee to have meekness in this manner. Thou shalt hold thyself in thy will and in thy feeling, if thou may, unable to dwell among men, and unworthy to serve God in conversation with his servants, unprofitable to thy even-Christian, wanting both cunning and might to fulfil good works of active life in help of thy even-Christian, as other men and women do; and, therefore, as a wretch and outcast and refuse of all men

* Job v 26.

and women thou art sperred* in a house alone, that thou shouldest not hurt nor grieve any man or woman by evil ensample, since thou canst not profit them by good working. After this it behoveth thee to look further that since thou art so unable to serve our Lord by outward bodily works, how much more thee behoveth to hold thyself unable and unworthy to serve Him ghostly by inward occupation. For our Lord is a spirit, as the prophet saith: *Before our face a ghost is our Lord Christ.*† And the kindly service to Him is ghostly, as He saith Himself: *Soothfast servants shall worship him in spirit and soothfastness.*‡ Thou, therefore, that art so boisterous,§ so lewd, so fleshly, so blind in ghostly things, and namely‖ of thine own soul (which it behoveth thee first to know if thou shouldest come to the knowing of God), how then shouldst thou feel thyself able or worthy to have state or likeness of contemplative life, which life, as I have said, lieth principally in ghostly knowing and feeling of God? This I say to thee, not that thou shouldst forethink¶ thy purpose and be

* Sperred—*i.e.*, enclosed, shut up.
† Lam. iv 20.
‡ John iv 23.
§ Boisterous—*i.e.*, rough, unskilled.
‖ Namely—*i.e.*, especially.
¶ Forethink—*i.e.*, abandon.

mispaid* with thy enclosing, but that thou shouldest feel this lowness soothfastly in thy heart if thou mayest, for it is sooth and no lies. And therefore thou shalt desire night and day, after thy might, to come as near as thou mayest to the state which thou hast taken, trowing steadfastly that is the best for thee, by the mercy of God, to travail in; and—though it be so that thou mayest not come to the fulness of it here in this life—thou mayest yet be in the beginning of it and trust surely to have the fulness thereof, by the mercy of God, in the bliss of heaven. For soothly that is my life; I feel myself so wretched, so frail, so fleshly and so far from true feeling of that I speak, that I can naught else but cry mercy and desire after it as I may, with an hope that our Lord will bring me thereto in the bliss of heaven. Do thou so and better, after that God giveth thee grace. The feeling of this lowness shall put out of thine heart unskilful beholding of other men's deeds, and it shall drive thee wholly to beholding thyself, as if there were no man living but God and thou. And thou shalt deem and hold thyself more vile and more wretched than is any creature that beareth life, and scarcely shalt thou suffer thyself, for the greatness and number of the sins and filths that thou shalt feel in thee.

* Mispaid—*i.e.*, ill-content.

Thus it behoveth thee to feel for some time, if thou wilt be very meek; for I tell thee soothly, if thou wilt be truly meek thou shalt think a venial sin in thyself more grievous and painful to thee, and greater in thy sight sometimes, than great deadly sins of other men. This is sooth to thee if thou wilt be contemplative, for this reason, that the thing which hurteth thy soul, or letteth it most from the feeling and knowing of God, ought to be most grievous and painful to thee. But a venial sin of thyself letteth thee more from the feeling and perfect love of Jesus Christ than any other man's sin may do, be it never so much. It seemeth therefore that thou shouldst arise in thine own heart against thyself to hate and condemn in thyself all manner of sin which letteth thee from the sight of God, more than against the faults of other men. For if thine heart be clean of thine own sins, soothly the sins of all other men shall not hurt thee; and, therefore, if thou wilt find rest here and in the bliss of heaven, after the counsel of one of the holy fathers say every day "What am I?" and deem* no man.

* Deem—*i.e.*, judge.

CHAPTER XVII

WHO SHOULD BLAME MEN'S DEFAULTS, AND DEEM THEM, AND WHO SHOULD NOT

But now sayest thou, how may this be? since it is a deed of charity to blame men for their defaults, and to deem them for their amending is a deed of mercy. As to this I answer as methinketh, that to thee, or to any other which hath state and purpose of life contemplative, it falleth not to leave the keeping of themselves and to behold and to blame other men for their faults, unless there were full great need, so that a man would perish unless thou blamed him. But the men which are active and have sovereignty and cure over others, as prelates and curates and such other, they are bound by their office and by way of charity to see and seek and deem rightfully other men's defaults: not of desire and delight to chastise them, but only for need, with dread of God and in His name, for love of salvation of their souls. Other men that are active and have no cure of others, they are bound to blame other men for their faults by way of charity, only when the sin is deadly, and may not well be corrected by any other man, and when he troweth that he would the sooner be amended by such correcting: else it is better that he

cease. That this is sooth it seemeth by Saint John, which held the state of contemplative life, and Saint Peter, which had the state of active life. When our Lord in His last supper with His disciples, at the privy stirring of Saint Peter to Saint John, told Saint John how Judas should betray Him, Saint John told it not to Saint Peter as he asked, but he turned him and laid his head upon Christ's breast, and was ravished by love into contemplation of God's privities, and so meedfully* to him that he forgot both Judas and Saint Peter, in tokening and teaching to other men that they should dispose them to do the same.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHY MEN SHOULD WORSHIP OTHERS AND LOWER THEMSELVES IN THEIR OWN HEART UNDER ALL OTHERS

THOU seest here then somewhat how thou shalt neither deem other men nor conceive any evil suspicion against them, but thou shalt love and worship in thy heart such as lead active life in the world and suffer many tribulations and temptations, which thou, sitting in thy house, feelest naught of. And they have full much travail and dis-ease

* Meedfully—*i.e.*, profitably.

for their own and other men's sustenance, and many of them would liefer serve God, if they might, as thou dost in bodily rest: and nevertheless they, in their worldly business, flee many sins which thou, if thou wert in their state, shouldst fall into, and they do many good deeds which thou couldst not do. There is no doubt that many do thus, though which they be thou wottest not, and therefore thou shalt worship all and set them in thy heart all above thee as thy sovereigns, and cast thee down under their feet, that thou be vilest and lowest in thine own sight. For it is no dread nor any peril to thee how much thou mayest low thyself beneath all others, though it were so that in God's sight thou hadst more grace than any other. But it is peril to thee to high thee and lift thyself in thy thought wilfully above any other man, though he were the most wretched or the most sinful caitiff that is in earth. For our Lord saith, *Whoso higheth himself, he shall be lowed, and whoso loweth himself, he shall be highed.** This part of meekness thee behoveth to have in thy beginning, and by this and by grace shalt thou come to the fulhead of it and of all other virtues. For whoso hath one virtue, he hath all other virtues. As much as thou hast of meekness, so much hast thou of charity, of patience, and of other

* Luke xiv 11.

virtues, though they be not showed outwardly. Be then busy to get meekness, and hold it; for it is the first and the last of all virtues. It is the first, for it is the ground of all, as Saint Austin saith: "If thou think to build an high house of virtues, ordain thee first a deep ground of meekness." Also it is the last, for it is the keeping and saving of all other virtues, as Saint Gregory saith: "He that gathereth virtues without meekness, he is like to him which maketh and beareth powder of spicery in the wind." Do thou never so many good deeds—fast thou, wake thou, or any other good works do thou—if thou have no meekness it is naught that thou dost.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW MEN SHOULD DO THAT WANT THE FEELING OF MEEKNESS IN AFFECTION, NOT DREADING TOO MUCH THEREFORE

NEVERTHELESS if thou mayest not feel this meekness in thine heart with affection as thou wouldest, do as thou mayest, meek thyself in will by reason, trowing that it should be so as I say though thou feel it not. And in *that* hold thee a more wretch, in that thou mayest not feel soothfastly thyself as thou art. And if thou do so, though thy flesh rise against thee and will not assent to

thy good will, be not too much adread, but bear and suffer the false feeling of thy flesh as a pain, and then thou shalt dispose and reprove that feeling and break down that rising of thine heart, as if thou wouldest be well paid to be trodden and spurned under other men's feet. And so, by the grace of Jesus Christ, through steadfast thinking on the meekness of His precious manhood, shalt thou much abate the stirrings of pride; and the virtue of meekness that was first in thy naked will shall be turned into feeling of affection; without which virtue, either in true will or in feeling, whoso disposeth himself to serve God in contemplative life, as the blind he shall stumble and never come thereto. The higher he climbeth by bodily penance and other virtues, and hath not this meekness, the lower he falleth. For as Saint Gregory saith: "He that cannot perfectly despise himself, he found never yet the meek wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XX

HOW HYPOCRITES AND HERETICS, FOR LACKING OF MEEKNESS, HOLD THEMSELVES HIGH IN THEIR HEARTS ABOVE ALL OTHERS

HYPOCRITES and heretics feel not this meekness, neither in good will nor in affection, but their hearts and their reins are full dry

and full cold from the soft feeling of this virtue, and so far are they from it that they ween that they have it. They gnaw on the dry bark without, but the sweet kernel of it and the inly savour they may not come to. They show outward meekness in habit and holy speech, in a lowly bearing and, as it seemeth, in many bodily and ghostly virtues. But nevertheless in the will and in the affection of their heart, where meekness should be, it is feigned. For they deem and despise and set at naught other men, that will not do as they do and teach. They hold them to be either fools by uncunning, or blinded by fleshly living, and, therefore, they lift themselves on high in their own sight above all others, weening that they live better than others and that they only have the soothfastness of good living, both in ghostly feeling and singular grace of God, and knowledge surpassing other men. And from this sight of themselves riseth a delight in their hearts in which they worship and praise themselves as if there were none but they. They praise and thank God with their lips, but in their heart they steal, as thieves, the worship and the thanking from God, and set it in themselves; and so they have neither meekness in feeling nor in will. A wretched caitiff, or a sinner which falleth all day and is sorry that he doth so, though he have not

meekness in affection, hath it in a good will. But a hypocrite or an heretic hath neither; for they have the condition of the Pharisee which came, as our Lord saith in the gospel, with the publican into the temple to pray. And when he came he prayed not nor asked aught of God, for he thought he had no need, but he began to thank God and said thus: "Lord, I thank thee that thou givest me grace more than to other, that I am not as other men be, robbers, lechers, or other such sinners." And he looked beside him and saw the publican, which he knew for a wretch, knocking on his breast only crying after mercy. Then he thanked God he was not such a one as he was. For "Lord," he said, "I fast twice in the week, and I pay truly my tithes." And when he had done so, our Lord saith that he gied home again without grace as he came, and gat right naught. But now sayest thou, wherein trespassed this Pharisee, since he thanked God, and what he said was sooth? As to this I answer and say, that this Pharisee trespassed inasmuch as he deemed and reproved in his heart the publican, which was justified of God. And also he trespassed, for he thanked God only with his mouth; but he delighted privily and wilfully by a privy pride in himself of the gifts of God, stealing the worship and praising from God

and setting it in himself. This same condition of the Pharisee soothly have heretics and hypocrites. They will not gladly pray, and if they pray they meek not themselves, acknowledging truly their wretchedness, but they make themselves by a feigning to thank and love God and speak of Him with their mouth. But their delight is vain and false and not in God. And yet they ween not that so they cannot love God, for as the wise man saith: *It is neither fair nor seemly, the praise of God in the mouth of a sinner.** Wherefore it is profitable to thee and to me and to other such wretches, to leave the condition of this Pharisee and feigned loving of God, and follow the publican in lowness: asking mercy and forgiveness of sins and grace of ghostly virtues, that we may afterwards with a clean heart soothfastly thank Him and love Him and give Him wholly worship without feigning. But our Lord asketh thus by His prophet: *Upon whom shall my spirit rest?* and He answereth Himself and saith, *Upon none but upon the meek, poor and contrite in heart, and that dread my words.*† If, therefore, thou wilt have the spirit of God ruling in thy heart, have meekness and dread Him.

* Ecclus. xv 9. † Isa. lxvii 2.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT THINGS MEN OUGHT TO BELIEVE BY A SURE FAITH

THE second thing which it behoveth thee to have, is sure troth in all the articles of the faith, and in the sacraments of Holy Church, trowing them steadfastly with all thy will in thy heart. And though thou feel any stirring in thy heart against any of them, be thou steadfast and not too much adread of feeling such stirrings, but forsake thine own wit without disputing or ransacking of them, and set thy faith generally in the faith of Holy Church, and charge not the stirring of thy heart which, as it seemeth to thee, is contrary thereto. For that stirring is not thy faith, but the faith of Holy Church is thy faith, though thou never see it nor feel it. Bear then such stirrings patiently as a scourge of our Lord, by the which He will cleanse thine heart and make thy faith steadfast. And it behoveth thee to love and worship in thine heart all the laws and ordinances made by prelates and rulers of Holy Church, either in declaring of the faith, or of the sacraments, or in general of all Christian men. Meekly and truly assent to them, though it may be that thou knowest not the cause of their ordinance; and, though

thou think that some be unskilful, thou shalt not deem them nor reprove them, but worship them all though they belong but little to thee. Neither receive any opinion of fantasy or singular conceit under colour of more holiness—as some do that are not wise—neither by thine own imagining nor by teaching of any other man, which contrarieth to the least ordinance or general teaching of all Holy Church. Moreover, thou shalt hope steadfastly that thou art ordained of our Lord to be saved as one of His chosen, by His mercy, and stir not from this hope whatsoever thou hearest or seest, or whatsoever temptation thou be in. And though thou think thyself so great a wretch that thou art worthy to sink in hell, for that thou dost no good nor servest God as thou shouldst do, yet hold thee in this troth and in this hope and ask mercy, and all shall be right well. Yea, and though all the devils of hell appeared in bodily likeness, sleeping or waking, saying to thee that thou shouldst not be saved, or all men living in earth, or all the angels in heaven, if it might be, said to thee the same, thou shouldst not believe them, nor be stirred much from the hope of salvation. This I say to thee, for some be so weak and so simple that, when they have given themselves all wholly to serve God after their cunning, if they feel any stirring

within by the incasting of the enemy, or else from without of any of the devil's prophets, which men call soothsayers, that they should not be saved, or that their state or their manner of living is not pleasing to God, they be astonied and stirred up with such words, and so for uncunning they fall sometimes into great heaviness, and as it were into a despair of salvation. Wherefore as methinketh it is speedful to every creature which by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is in full will to forsake sin, and as clearly as his conscience telleth him suffereth no deadly sin to rest in him that he shriveth him not soon thereof, and meeketh him to the sacraments of Holy Church, to have a trust of salvation; and much more they that give themselves wholly to God and flee venial sins after their might. And on the contrary wise, as perilous it is to him which lieth wittingly in deadly sin to have trust of salvation, if, in hope of that trust, he will not forsake his sin, nor low him truly to God and to Holy Church.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW A STABLE INTENTION IS NEEDFUL TO THOSE THAT WOULD PLEASE GOD, AND DISCRETION IN BODILY WORKS

THE third thing which is needful to thee to have in thy beginning is an whole and stable intention, that is to say an whole will and a desire only to please God; for that is charity, without which all is naught that thou dost. And thou shalt set thine intent always to search and travail how thou mayest please Him, and at no time to cease wilfully of good occupation either bodily or ghostly. Nor shalt thou set a time in thy heart, as thou wouldest serve God thus long, and then suffer thine heart to fall down into vain thoughts and idle occupations, weening that this were needful for saving of thy bodily kind; leaving the keeping of thy heart and good occupation, seeking a rest and comfort for a time outwardly by thy bodily wits or inwardly by vanities, as it were for a recreation of thy spirit, that it should be sharper afterwards to ghostly travail; for I trow it is not sooth. I say not that thou mayest in deed perform thine intent; for ofttimes thy bodily need, eating, drinking, sleeping, and speaking, and the frailty of thy flesh shall let thee, be thou never so busy, and

hinder thee. But I would that thy will and thine intent were alway whole to travail ghostly and bodily, and no time to be idle, but alway lifting up thine heart by desire to God and to the bliss of heaven, whether thou eatest or drinkest, or any other bodily travail that thou usest; as much as thou mayest wilfully leaving it not. For if thou have this intent it shall make thee ever quick and sharp in thy travail; and if thou fall by frailty or negligence into any idle occupation or vain speech, it shall smite upon thy heart sharply as a prick, and make thee to irk all vanities and to turn again hastily to inward thinking of Jesus Christ or to some good occupation. For anent thy bodily kind it is good to use discretion in eating, drinking, and sleeping, and in all manner of bodily penance, and in long prayers by speech or in bodily feeling by great fervour of devotion, either in weeping or such other, and also in imagining of the spirit when a man feeleth no grace. In all these works it is good to keep discretion, for the mean is the best. But in destroying of sin by keeping of thine heart, and in continual desire of virtues and the bliss of heaven, and to have ghostly knowing and loving of Jesus Christ, hold thou no mean, for the more that is of this, the better it is. For thou shalt hate sin and all fleshly loves and dreads in thine

heart without ceasing; and thou shalt love virtues and cleanness, and desire them without stinting if thou mayest. I say not that it is needful to salvation, but I hope it is speedful, and if thou keep it thou shalt profit more in a year in virtues, than thou shalt without this intent in seven years.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF A LITTLE REHEARSING OF THINGS SAID BEFORE, AND OF MAKING OF OFFERING THAT SHOULD BE OFFERED TO GOD

Now I have told thee first of the end which thou shalt behold in thy desire, draw thee towards it as much as thou mayest. Also I have told thee of the beginning, what it needeth to have, as meekness, sure troth, and an whole intent to God; upon which ground thou shalt set thy ghostly house by prayer and meditation, and by other ghostly virtues. Then I say to thee thus; pray thou, or think thou, or any other deed that thou dost, good by grace or bad by thine own frailty, or whatsoever thou feelest, seest or hearest, smellest or savourest, without in thy bodily wits or within in imagination, knowing or feeling in thy reason: bring it all within the troth and the rules of Holy Church, and cast all into the mortar of meekness, and

break it small with the pestle of the dread of God, and throw the powder of all this into the fire of desire, and offer it so to God; and I tell thee forsooth, well shall that offering be liken in the sight of thy Lord Jesus, and sweet shall the smoke of that fire smell to the face of thy Lord Jesus. This is to say, draw all this that thou feelest within the troth of Holy Church and break thyself in meekness, and offer the desire of thine heart to thy Lord Jesus, to have Him only and naught else but Him. And if thou do thus I hope by the grace of Christ thou shalt never be overcome by thine enemy. This taught us Saint Paul, when he said thus: *Whether ye eat or drink, or what manner of deed that ye do, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*,* forsaking yourself, and offer it up to Him. Means which thou shalt most use, as I have before said, are prayer and meditation. First I shall show thee a little of prayer, and after of meditation.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF PRAYER THAT IS SPEEDFUL TO GET CLEANNESS OF HEART AND VIRTUES

PRAYER is profitable and speedful to use to get cleanness of heart by destroying of sin and receiving of virtues. Not that thou

* 1 Cor. x 31.

shouldest by thy prayer make our Lord know what thou desirest, for He knoweth well enough what thou needest, but to make thee able and ready by thy prayer that thou mayest receive as a clean vessel the grace that our Lord will freely give to thee; which grace may not be felt till thou be assayed and purified by the fire of desire in devout prayer. For though it be so that prayer is not the cause for which our Lord giveth grace, nevertheless it is a way by which grace freely cometh to a soul.

CHAPTER XXV

HOW MEN SHOULD PRAY, AND WHEREON THE POINT OF THEIR THOUGHT SHOULD BE SET IN PRAYER

But now desirest thou peradventure to know how thou shouldest pray, and upon what thing thou shouldest set the point of thy thought in thy prayer; and also what prayer were best for thee to use. As to the first, I answer and say thus: that when thou art wakened of thy sleep and ready to pray, thou shalt feel thyself fleshly and heavy; ever downward drawn to vain thought, either of dreams or fantasies or of unskilful business of the world and of thy flesh. Then it behoveth thee to quicken thine heart by prayer, and stir it as much as thou

mayest to some devotion. And in thy prayer thou shalt not set thine heart in any bodily thing, but all thy travail shall be to draw in thy thought from beholding of all earthly things, that thy desire may be as it were naked and bare from all earthly things, ever upward stying unto Jesus Christ, whom thou mayest never see bodily as He is in His godhead, nor by bodily likeness in imagination; though thou mayest, through devout and continual beholding of the meekness of His precious manhood, feel the goodness and grace of His godhead. When thy desire is eased and holpen and, as it were, made free from all fleshly thoughts and affections, and is much lifted up by ghostly might into savour and delight in Him of His ghostly presence, and held therein much of the time of thy prayer, so that thou hast no great mind of earthly thing, or else the mind grieveth thee but little: if thou canst pray thus, then canst thou pray well. For prayer is naught else but a stying desire of the heart into God, by withdrawing of the heart from all earthly thoughts. And so is prayer likened to a fire which of its own kind leaveth the lowness of the earth and always styeth up into the air. Right so desire in prayer, when it is touched and lightened of the ghostly fire which is God, it is ever upstying to Him that it came from.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THE FIRE OF LOVE

ALL men that speak of the fire of love know not well what it is; for what it is I cannot tell thee, save this (I may tell thee) that it is neither bodily nor bodily felt. A soul may feel it in prayer or in devotion, which soul is in the body, yet feeleth it not by any bodily wit. For though it be so that, if it work in a soul, the body may be turned into an heat and, as it were, chafed* for loving travail of the spirit; nevertheless, the fire of love is not bodily, for it is only the ghostly desire of the soul. This is no doubt to any man or woman that feeleth devotion; but some are simple, and ween—because it is called fire—that it should be as hot as bodily fire is, and for this I say what I have said.

CHAPTER XXVII

THAT THE CERTAIN PRAYER IN SPEECH ORDAINED OF GOD AND OF HOLY CHURCH IS BEST FOR THEM THAT ARE NEWLY TURNED TO GOD AND TO DEVOTION

Now as to the other question, to know what prayer were best for thee to use, I shall say

* Chafed—*i.e.*, warmed.

as methinketh. Thou shalt understand that there be three manner of prayers: the first is prayer of speech made specially of God as is the *Pater noster*, and made also more generally by the ordinance of Holy Church, as matins, evensong and hours; and also made by devout men of other special sayings, as to our Lord and to our Lady, and to His saints. As to this manner of prayer, which is called vocal, methinketh unto thee—that art religious, and by certain rule art bound to say matins and hours—I hold it most speedful to say them as devoutly as thou mayest. For when thou sayest thy matins, thou sayest also thy *Pater noster* principally; and overmore to stir thee to more devotion was it ordained to say also psalms and hymns and such other which He made by the Holy Ghost, as the *Pater noster* is. And therefore thou shalt not say them hastily and recklessly, as if thou wert evil apaid* that thou art bound to them, but thou shalt gather thy affection and thy thought to say them more sadly and more devoutly than any other special prayer of devotion, trowing forsooth that, since it is the prayer of Holy Church, there is no vocal prayer so profitable to thee to use commonly as that is. And so shalt thou put away all heaviness, and by grace shalt thou turn thy need into a good

* Evil apaid—*i.e.*, ill-content.

will, and thy bond into a great freedom, that shall be to thee no letting of ghostly occupation. And after this thou mayest, if thou wilt, use others, as the *Pater noster* or any such other, and of these that in which thou feelest most savour and most ghostly comfort, that I hold best for thee. This manner of prayer is speedful commonly to every man in the beginning of his conversion to use most of any other ghostly occupation. For a man in the beginning is rude and boisterous and fleshly, unless he have the grace, and cannot think any ghostly thoughts in meditation, for his soul is not yet cleansed from old sin. And, therefore, I think it is most speedful to use this manner of prayer, as to say his *Pater noster* and his *Ave*, and to read upon his psalter and such other. For he that cannot run lightly by ghostly prayer, for his feet of knowing and loving be sick for sin, he needeth to have a sure staff to hold him by. This staff is special prayer of speech ordained by God and Holy Church in help of men's souls; by the which prayer the soul of a fleshly man—that is alway falling downward into worldly thoughts, and fleshly affections—shall be lifted up from them, and be held by it as by a staff, fed with the sweet words of the prayer as a child with milk, and ruled by it that he fall not into errors nor fantasies by his vain meditations.

For in this manner of prayer is no deceit; whoso will, may steadfastly and meekly travail therein.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHAT PERIL IT IS TO MEN THAT, IN THE BEGINNING OF THEIR TURNING TO GOD, LEAVE TOO SOON THE COMMON PRAYER OF HOLY CHURCH AND GIVE THEMSELVES TO MEDITATION

THOU mayest see by this, therefore, that these men, if any be such, that in the beginning of their conversion or soon after—when they have felt a little ghostly comfort either in devotion or in knowing and are not yet stabled therein—leave such vocal prayer and other bodily exercise too soon and give them wholly to meditation, they are not wise. For often in the rest of their meditation they imagine and think on ghostly things after their own wit, and follow their bodily feeling, and have not yet received grace thereto; and therefore by indiscretion they often overtravail their wit and break their bodily might, and so fall into fantasies and singular conceits, or into open errors, and let the grace that God giveth them by such vanities. The cause of all this is a privy pride and presumption in themselves; as when they have felt a little

grace they ween it is so much surpassing others, that they fall into vainglory and so they lose it. If they wist how little it were that they feel in regard of that which God giveth or may give, they would be ashamed to speak out thereof, unless it were in great need. Of this manner of prayer by speech David the prophet, to stir other men to pray both with heart and with mouth, said: *With my voice I cried to God, and with my speech I besought our Lord.**

CHAPTER XXIX

OF THE SECOND MANNER OF PRAYER, THAT IS IN SPEECH NOT CERTAIN, BUT FOLLOWETH THE STIRRING OF DEVOTION

THE second manner of prayer is by speech, but it is not of any certain special saying. And this is when a man or woman feeleth grace of devotion by the gift of God, and in his devotion speaketh to Him as if he were bodily in His presence, with such words as accordeth most to his stirring for the time, and as come to his mind after divers regards which he feeleth in his heart: either rehearsing his sins and his wretchedness, or the malice and sleights of the enemy, or else the mercy and the goodness of God. And with that

* Ps. cxli 2.

he crieth with desire of heart and with speech of mouth to our Lord for succour and for help, as a man that were in peril among his enemies or in sickness, showing his sores to God as to a leech; saying as David said: *Ah, Lord, deliver me from mine enemies*,* or else thus: *Ah, Lord, heal my soul for I have sinned against Thee*,† or other such as come to mind. And also he thinketh so much goodness and grace and mercy in God, that him liketh with great affection of the heart to love Him and thank Him by such words and psalms as accord to the loving and praising of God: as David said: *Love ye and praise our Lord for He is good and merciful*,‡ and by such other as he is stirred to say.

CHAPTER XXX

THAT THIS SECOND MANNER OF PRAYER PLEASETH GOD MUCH, AND MAKETH A MAN TO BEHAVE HIM IN BODY AS HE WERE DRUNKEN, AND IN SOUL TO BE WOUNDED WITH THE SWORD OF LOVE

THIS manner of prayer much pleaseth God, for it is only of the affection in the heart; and therefore it goeth never unsped without some grace. This prayer belongeth to the

* Ps. lviii 2. † Ps. xl 5.
‡ Ps. cxxxv 1.

second part of contemplation as I have said before, for whoso hath this gift of God fervently, it behoveth him for the time to flee presence and company of all men, to be alone that he be not letted. Whoso have it, let him hold it while he may, for it may not long last in the fervour. For if grace come plenteously it is wonderfully travailous to the spirit, though it be liking; and it is much wasting to the bodily kind whoso much uses it, for it maketh the body—if grace come mightily—to stir or turn here and there as a man that were mad or drunken and could have no rest. This is a point of the passion of love the which by great violence and mastery breaketh down lusts and likings of any earthly thing, and it so woundeth the soul with the blissful sword of love, that the body falleth down and may not bear it. This touching is of so great might that the most vicious or fleshly man living in earth, if he were well touched once mightily with this sharp sword, he should be right sad and sober a great while after, and loathe all the lusts and likings of his flesh and all earthly things which he had most delight in.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW THE FIRE OF LOVE WASTETH ALL FLESHLY LUSTS, AS OTHER FIRE WASTETH BODILY THINGS

Of this manner of feeling speaketh the prophet Jeremy thus: The love and the feeling of God *was made in my heart* not fire but *as fire glowing*.* For as bodily fire burneth and wasteth all bodily things where it cometh, right so ghostly fire, as is the love of God, burneth and wasteth all fleshly loves and likings in a man's soul. *And this fire is stoken*† *in my bones*, as the prophet saith of himself. That is to say, This love fulfilleth the mights of my soul as mind, reason and will, with grace and ghostly sweetness, as marrow filleth the bone: and that within, not without in the wits. Nevertheless, it is so mighty within that it smiteth out into the body, and maketh all the body to quake and tremble. It is so far from the bodily kind and so uncouth‡ that he cannot reason of it and may not bear it, but faileth and falleth down as the prophet saith. And, therefore, our Lord tempereth it and withdraweth the fervour and suffereth the heart to fall into a sobriety of more softness. Whoso can pray

* Jer. xx 9. † Stoken—*i.e.*, shut in.
‡ Uncouth—*i.e.*, unknown, unusual.

thus often, he speedeth soon in his travail. He shall get more of virtues in a little time than some man without this (or another as good) shall get in long time, for all the bodily penance that he might do; and whoso hath this needeth not to charge the bodily kind with more penance than it beareth if he have it often.

CHAPTER XXXII

OF THE THIRD MANNER OF PRAYER, THAT IS ONLY IN THE HEART WITHOUT SPEECH OUTWARD

THE third manner of prayer is only in the heart without speech, by great rest and softness of the body and of the soul. A clean heart him behoveth to have that shall pray well thus, for it is of such men and women that, by long travail bodily and ghostly or else by such sharp smitings of love as I have before said, come into a rest of spirit so that their affection is turned into a ghostly savour, that they may nigh continually pray in their heart and love and praise God without great letting of temptations or of vanities, as I have before said in the second part of contemplation. Of this manner of prayer saith Saint Paul thus: *If I pray with my tongue only* by the will of the spirit and by travail, *the prayer is meedful, but my soul is not fed,* for

it feeleth not the fruit of ghostly sweetness by understanding. *What shall I then do?* saith Saint Paul. And he answereth and saith: *I shall pray by travail and desire of the spirit** and I shall pray also more inwardly in my spirit without travail in ghostly savour and sweetness of the love and the sight of God; by the which sight and feeling of love my soul shall be fed. Thus, as I understand, Saint Paul could pray. Of this manner of prayer speaketh our Lord in holy writ by figure thus: *The fire of love shall ever be lit* in the soul of a devout and clean man or woman, the which is the altar of our Lord, *and the priest shall every day at morn lay to sticks* and nourish the fire. That is to say this man shall by holy psalms, clean thoughts, and fervent desire nourish the fire of love in his heart, *that it go not out at any time.*† This rest our Lord giveth to some of His servants, as it were a reward of their travail and a shadow of the love which they shall have in the bliss of heaven.

* 1 Cor. xiv 14. † Levit. vi 12.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW MEN SHOULD DO THAT ARE TRAVAILED WITH VAIN THOUGHTS IN THEIR PRAYERS

But now sayest thou that I speak over high to thee in this manner of prayer, for it is no mastery to me to say it, but to do it there is the mastery. Thou sayest that thou canst not pray thus devoutly nor so wholly in heart as I speak of. For when thou wouldst heave the mind of thine heart upward to God in thy prayer, thou feelest so many vain thoughts of thine own deeds before done, or what thou shalt do, and of other men's deeds and such many other, letting and tarrying* thee so, that thou mayest neither feel savour nor rest nor devotion in thy saying; and ofttimes, the more thou travailest to keep thine heart, the further it is from thee and the harder—sometimes from the beginning to the last end—so that thou thinkest all that thou dost is but lost. As unto this that thou sayest, that I speak too high to thee of prayer, I grant well that I speak otherwise than I can or may do. Nevertheless, I say it for this intent, that thou shouldest know how we ought to pray if we did well. And since we may not do so, that we know then meekly our feebleness and cry God mercy. Our

* Tarrying—*i.e.*, vexing.

Lord bade thus Himself when He said: *Thou shalt love God of all thine heart and all thy soul and all thy might.** It is impossible to any man living in earth to fulfil this bidding so fully as it is said, and yet nevertheless our Lord bade us love so; and for this intent, as Saint Bernard saith, that we should know thereby our feebleness and then meekly cry after mercy, and we shall have it. Nevertheless, I shall tell thee as methinketh in this asking.

When thou shalt pray, make thine intent and thy will in the beginning as whole and as clean to God as thou mayest shortly in thy mind, and then begin and do as thou mayest. And though thou be never so much letted against thy first will be not too much adread, nor too angry with thyself, nor impatient against God, that He giveth thee not that savour and ghostly sweetness with devotion as thou thinkest that He giveth to other creatures. And see thereby thine own feebleness and bear it easily, holding in thine own sight thine own prayer, feeble as it is, with meekness of heart, trusting also surely in the mercy of our Lord that He shall make it good and profitable to thee more than thou knowest or feelest. For wit thou well that thou art excused of thy debt, and thou shalt have meed for it as for any other good deed

* Luke x 27.

that thou dost in charity, though thine heart were not thereupon in the doing. Do, therefore, that which belongeth to thee, and suffer our Lord to give what He will, and teach Him not. And though thou think thyself reckless and negligent, as if thou wert in great default for such things, nevertheless shalt thou—for this default and all other venials which may not be eschewed in this wretched life—lift up thine heart to God, acknowledging thy wretchedness, and cry mercy with a good trust of forgiveness, and strive no more therewith, nor hang longer thereupon, as thou wouldest by mastery not feel such wretchedness. Leave off and go to some other good deed, bodily or ghostly; and think to do better another time. But though another time thou fall in the same—yea an hundred times, yea a thousand times—yet do as I have said, and all shall be well. Furthermore, a soul that never may find rest of heart in prayer, but all her lifetime is striving with her thoughts and tarried and troubled with them, if she keep her in meekness and charity in other sides, she shall have full much meed in heaven for her good travail.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OF MEDITATION OF SINFUL MEN AFTER THAT THEY ARE WHOLLY TURNED TO GOD

Now of meditation shall I tell thee a little, as methinketh. Thou shalt understand that in meditations may no certain rule well be set for every man to keep; for they are in free gift of our Lord after the divers disposings of chosen souls, and after the state that they are in. And also after that they profit in virtues and in their estate, so He increaseth their meditations both in ghostly knowing and loving of Him; for whoso is ever alike wise* in knowing of God and ghostly things, it seemeth that he waxeth but a little in the love of God. And that may be showed openly in the apostles; when they in the day of Pentecost were fulfilled with burning love of the Holy Ghost, they were made neither fools nor foltes,† but they were made wondrous wise both in knowing and speaking of God and of ghostly things, as much as a man might have in flesh living. Thus speaketh Holy Writ of them: *They were fulfilled of the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak the great marvels of God.*‡ And all

* *Query?* always equally wise.

† Foltes—*i.e.*, fools, dolts. ‡ Acts ii 4, 11.

that knowing they had by ravishing in the love of the Holy Ghost.

Divers meditations there are which our Lord putteth in a man's heart. Some shall I tell thee as methinketh: for this intent, if thou feel any of them, that thou shouldest the better travail in them. In the beginning of conversion of such a man that hath been much soiled with worldly or fleshly sins, commonly his thought is most upon his sins with great compunction and sorrow of heart, and with great weepings and many tears of the eye, meekly and busily asking mercy and forgiveness of God for them. And if he be touched sharply, for that our Lord will make him soon clean, he shall well think that his sins are ever in his sight, so foul and so horrible that scarcely shall he more bear himself. And though he shrive him never so cleanly, yet shall he find fighting and fretting and biting of his conscience, such that he shall think that he is not shriven right. And scarcely shall he have any rest more, insomuch that he could not endure such travail, were it not that our Lord of His mercy comforteth him sometimes as He will, by great devotion of His passion or of some other, as He will give it. Upon this manner worketh our Lord in some men's hearts, more or less, as He will. And all this is the great mercy of our Lord, that not only will

He forgive the sin or the trespass, but He will forgive the trespass and the pain for it in purgatory, for such a little pain here of biting of conscience. And also if He will dispose a man to receive any special gift of the love of God, it behoveth him first to be scoured and cleansed by such a fire of compunction for all the great sins before done. Of this manner of travail speaketh David in many places of the psalter, and specially in the psalm *Miserere mei Deus.**

CHAPTER XXXV

THAT THE MEDITATION OF THE MANHOOD OF CHRIST OR OF HIS PASSION IS GIVEN FREELY OF THE HOLY GHOST, AND HOW IT SHALL BE KNOWN WHEN IT IS GIVEN

And then sometimes after this travail and sometimes withal to such a man, or else to another which by grace of God hath been kept in innocence, our Lord giveth a meditation of His manhood, as of His birth or of His passion, and of the compassion of our Lady Saint Mary. When this meditation is made by the Holy Ghost, then it is right profitable and gracious, and that shalt thou wit by this token: When it is so that thou art stirred to a meditation in God, and

* Ps. l.

thy thought is suddenly drawn out from all worldly and fleshly things, and thou thinkest that thou seest in thy soul thy Lord Jesus in bodily likeness as He was in earth, and how He was taken of the Jews and bound as a thief, beaten and despised, scourged and deemed to death, how lowly He bare the cross upon His back and how cruelly He was nailed thereupon; also of the crown of thorns upon His head, and of the sharp spear that sticked Him to the heart; and thou in this ghostly sight feelest thy heart stirred to so great compassion and pity of thy Lord Jesus that thou mournest, and weepest, and criest with all the mights of thy body and of thy soul, wondering at the goodness and the love, the patience, and the meekness of thy Lord Jesus, that He would, for so sinful a caitiff as thou art, suffer so much pain. And nevertheless thou feelest so much goodness and mercy in our Lord that thine heart riseth up into a love and a gladness of Him with many sweet tears, having great trust of forgiveness of thy sins and of salvation of thy soul by the virtue of this precious passion. Then when the mind of His passion or any point of His manhood is thus made in thine heart by such a ghostly sight, with devout affection answering thereto, wit thou well then that it is not of thine own working, nor feigning of any wicked spirit, but by

the grace of the Holy Ghost. For it is an opening of the ghostly eye into Christ's manhood, and it may be called the fleshly love of God, as Saint Bernard calleth it, inasmuch as it is set in the fleshly kind of Christ. And it is right good and a great help in destroying of great sins, and a good way to come to virtues, and so, after, to contemplation of the Godhead. For a man shall not come to ghostly light in contemplation of Christ's godhead, unless he first come in imagination by bitterness and by compassion and by steadfast thinking of His manhood. This Saint Paul did. First he said thus: *I showed you right naught that I could, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.** As if he had said: my knowing and my trust is only in the passion of Christ. And therefore said he thus also: *Forbidden be from me all manner of joy and liking, but in the cross and in the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.*† And nevertheless afterward he said thus: *First I preached of the manhood and the passion of Christ ; now I preach to you of the Godhead,*‡ as thus, that Christ is the might of God and the endless wisdom of God.

* 1 Cor. xi 2. † Gal. vi 14.
‡ 1 Cor. i 24.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THAT THE MEDITATION OF THE PASSION OF CHRIST IS WITHDRAWN FROM THEM THAT IT IS GIVEN TO, OFTTIMES FOR DIVERS CAUSES

THIS manner of meditation a man hath not always when he would, but when our Lord will give it. Unto some men and women He giveth it all their lifetime, by times, when He visiteth them; for some men are so tender in their affection that, when they hear men speak or else when they think of His precious passion, their hearts melt in devotion and are fed and comforted against all manner temptations of the enemy: and that is a great gift of God. To some men He giveth it first plenteously, and afterwards He withdraweth it for divers causes, either if a man were proud of it in his own sight or for some other sin, by which he maketh himself unable to receive the grace; or else our Lord withdraweth it and all other devotions sometimes from a man or a woman, for He will suffer him to be assailed by temptations of his enemy. And so will He dispose a man to know and feel himself more ghostly. For He said so Himself to His disciples: *It is speedful* to you that I go from you bodily,*

* Speedful—*i.e.*, profitable.

*for if I go not the Holy Ghost may not come to you.** For as long as He was with them they loved Him much, but it was fleshly in His manhood; and therefore it was speedful to them that He should withdraw the bodily form from their sight, that the Holy Ghost might come to them and teach them to love Him and know Him more ghostly, as He did on the day of Pentecost. Right so is it speedful to some that our Lord withdraw a little the bodily and the fleshly likeness from the eye of the soul, that the heart might be set and fixed more busily in ghostly desire and seeking of His godhead.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OF DIVERS TEMPTATIONS OF THE FIEND

NEVERTHELESS, it behoveth a man to suffer many temptations first. And these temptations fall ofttimes to some men and women after comfort is withdrawn, upon divers manners, by malice of the enemy. As thus, when the devil perceiveth devotion much withdrawn, so that the soul is left as it were naked for a time, then sendeth he to some men temptations of lechery and gluttony, so hot and so burning that they shall think that they felt never none so grievous in all

* John xvi 7.

their lifetime before, when they gave themselves most to sin. Insomuch that they shall think it impossible to stand long and suffer, and that they shall needs fall unless they have help. And, therefore, have they then much sorrow, both for the lacking of comfort and devotion which they were wont to have, and they have much dread of falling from God by such open sins. And all this worketh the devil at the sufferance of God, to make them forego their good purposes and turn again to sin as they were wont to do. But whoso will abide awhile and suffer a little pain, and not turn again to sin for anything, the hand of our Lord is full near and helpeth right soon. For He keepeth him full safely, and the man wots not how; as the prophet David saith in the person of our Lord: *I am with him in his tribulation, and in temptation I shall deliver him, and I shall make him glorious in my bliss.** Some men be tempted by ghostly sins maliciously, as by mis-trowing of the faith, or of the sacrament of our Lord's blessed body: also of despair or of blasphemy in our Lord or any of his saints: or loathing of their life, or bitterness or unskilful heaviness, or of too much dread of themselves or of their body, if they put themselves wholly to God's service. Some men be tempted also—and

* Ps. xc 15.

namely solitary men and women—by dreads and ugliness and quakings and shakings, either appearing to them in bodily likeness or else in imagining, sleeping, and waking; which tarrieth them so that hardly may they have any rest. And also on many other wises he tempteth more than I can or may say.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

OF DIVERS REMEDIES AGAINST TEMPTATIONS OF THE FIEND

REMEDY to such men or women that are travailed thus or any other wise may be this: first that they will put all their trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and bring to mind often His passion and the pains that He suffered for us, and that they then trow steadfastly that all sorrows and travail that they suffer in such temptations—which to an uncunning man seemeth a forsaking of God—they are no reproving nor any forsaking, but assaying for their betterment; either for cleansing of their sins before done, or for great increasing of their meed and disposing to much grace, if they will suffer awhile and stand fast, so that they turn not again wilfully to sin. Another remedy is that they dread not nor charge not as for a sin, nor set not at heart such malicious

stirrings of despair or of blasphemy, or of the sacrament, or any such other that were ugly to hear; for the feeling of these temptations defileth the soul no more than if they heard an hound bark or felt a flea bite. They tarry the soul, but they appair* it not, if a man will despise them and set them at naught. For it is not good to strive with them, to put them out by mastery; for the more that men strive with such thoughts the more they cleave to them. And, therefore, they shall, as much as they may, draw out their thought from them, and set it to some other occupation. And yet if they will ever hang upon them, then it is good to them that they be not angry nor heavy for feeling them, but with a good trust in God do bear them, as it were a bodily pain or a scourge of our Lord for cleansing of their sins, as long as He will, for His love; as He was scourged and bare the cross for their love. And over this it is good to them to show their hearts to some wise man in the beginning before they be rooted in the heart, and that they leave their own wit and follow the counsel of him; and that they show them not lightly to any uncunning or worldly man, which never felt such temptations, for such might lightly bring a simple soul into despair by uncunning of himself. Of this manner of temptations,

* Appair—*i.e.*, harm.

by which a man seemeth forsaken of God and is not, in comfort of them which are tempted our Lord saith thus by His prophet: *In a little I forleft thee*—that is to say, I suffered thee to be tarried a little—*and in point of my wrath I smote thee*—that is to say, all the penance and the pain that thou sufferest here is but a point of my wrath in regard of the pain of hell or of purgatory—*and yet in my manifold mercies I shall gather thee**—and when thou thinkest that thou art forsaken, then shall I of my great mercy gather thee again to Me. For when thou weenest that thou art as it were lost, then shall our Lord help thee as Job saith: *When thou art brought so low by travail* in temptation that thou thinkest thou hast none help nor no comfort, but art as it were a forlorn man, yet stand stiffly in hope, and pray God, and soothly *thou shalt suddenly spring up as the day star* in gladness of heart, *and have a very trust in God*,† as Job said.

* Isa. liv 7. † Job xi 17.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HOW GOD SUFFERETH THEM THAT HE CHOOSETH TO BE TARRIED AND TEMPTED, AND AFTERWARDS COMFORTETH THEM AND STABLISHETH THEM IN GRACE

ALSO in comfort of such men that they should not despair in temptation, the Wise Man saith of our Lord: *In temptation our Lord* forsaketh not a man, but *goeth with him* from the beginning unto the last end; for he saith, *first He chooseth Him*, and that is when He draweth a man to Him by comfort of devotion: and afterward *sorrow and dread and assaying He bringeth upon him*, and that is when He withdraweth devotion and suffereth him to be tempted. And he saith that *He tormenteth him in tribulation until He have well assayed him in his thoughts, and until a man will put all his trust in Him fully. And then after this our Lord bringeth him out into the right way, and fasteneth him to Him and gladdeth him, and then showeth him His privities, and giveth him His treasure of knowing and understanding of righteousness.**

By these words of Holy Writ mayest thou see that these or any other temptations, be they never so ugly, are speedful and profitable to a man that by grace is in full will to forsake

* Ecclus. iv 18-21.

sin, if he will suffer as he may and abide God's will, and not turn again to sin which he hath forsaken, for no sorrow nor pain nor dread of such temptations, but ever stand still in travail and in prayer with good hope. Our Lord of His endless goodness, having pity and mercy of all His creatures, when He seeth time layeth to His hand, and smiteth down the devil and all his power; and easeth them of their travail, and putteth away all dreads and sorrows and darkness out of their hearts. And He bringeth into their souls light of grace, opening the sight of the soul to see that all the travail that they had was speedful to them, giving them also a new ghostly might to withstand all the fondings* of the fiend, and all deadly sins without great travail, and leadeth them into a sadness of good virtuous living. In which, if they be meek, He keepeth them unto the last end, and then taketh them all wholly to Him. This thing I say to thee, if thou be tarried or travailed with any such manner temptations, be not too much adread, but do as I have said and better if thou may; and I hope by the grace of Jesus Christ thou shalt never be overcome by thine enemy.

* Fondings—*i.e.*, follies.

CHAPTER XL

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT GIVE HIMSELF TO IDLENESS, NOR LIGHTLY LEAVE THE GRACE THAT IS GIVEN HIM OF GOD

After this, when thou art escaped such temptations, or else our Lord hath kept thee (as He doth many by His mercy) that thou shalt not be tarried much with any such, then it is good for thee that thou turn not thy rest into idleness; for there is many a man that taketh rest upon him too soon. But thou shalt, if thou wilt, begin a new game and a new travail; and that is to enter within into thine own soul by meditation, to know what it is, and by the knowing thereof to come to the ghostly knowing of God. For Saint Austin saith: "By the knowing of myself I shall get the knowing of God." I say not that it is needful for thee and due to travail so, nor for any other man, unless he feel him stirred by grace as he were called thereto. For our Lord giveth divers gifts whereso He will, not to one man all, nor to all men one; save charity which is common to all men. And, therefore, if a man or woman have received a gift of God—as devotion in prayer or in the passion of Christ, or any other be it never so little—let him not leave it too soon for any other, unless he feel

soothfastly a better; but hold that he hath and travail therein stably, ever desiring a better when God will give it. Nevertheless if that be withdrawn somewhat, and he seeth a better and feeleth his heart stirred thereto, then seemeth it a calling of our Lord to the better, and then it is time that he follow after to get it, and fulfil it as swiftly as he may.

CHAPTER XLI

THAT A MAN SHOULD KNOW THE MEASURE OF HIS GIFT, THAT HE MAY DESIRE AND TAKE A BETTER WHEN GOD WILL GIVE IT

Our holy fathers herebefore taught us that we should know the measure of our gift, and work upon that; not taking upon us by feigning more than we have in feeling. We may ever desire the best, but we may not ever work the best, for we have not yet received that grace. An hound that runneth after the hare only because he seeth other hounds to run, when he is weary resteth him or turneth him home again. But if he run because he seeth the hare, he will not spare for weariness till he have gotten it. Right so it is ghostly. Whoso hath grace, be it never so little, and leaveth wilfully the working thereof, and maketh himself to travail in another which he hath not yet, but only

because he seeth or heareth that other men did so, soothly he may run awhile till he be weary, and then shall he turn home again; and unless he beware, he may hurt his feet by some fantasies ere he come home. But he that worketh in such grace as he hath, and desireth by prayer meekly and lastingly after more, and after feeleth his heart stirred to follow the grace which he desired, he may safely run if he keep meekness. And therefore desire of God as much as thou mayest, without measure or discretion, of all that belongeth to His love or to heavenly bliss; for who can most desire of God, most shall feel of Him. But work as thou mayest, and cry God mercy for that thou mayest not. Thus it seemeth Saint Paul said that *every man has his gift of God, one thus and another thus; for to every man that shall be saved is given a grace after the measure of Christ's gift.** And, therefore, it is speedful that we know the gifts which are given us of God, that we may work in them, for by these we shall be saved; as some by bodily works and by deeds of mercy, some by great bodily penance, some by sorrow and weeping for their sins all their lifetime, some by preaching and teaching, some by divers graces and gifts of devotion shall be saved and come to bliss.

* 1 Cor. vii 7; Eph. iv 7; 1 Cor. xv 4, 8; 1 Cor. ii 12.

CHAPTER XLII

THAT A MAN SHOULD TRAVAIL TO KNOW HIS OWN SOUL AND THE MIGHTS THEREOF, AND BREAK DOWN THE GROUND OF SIN THEREIN

NEVERTHELESS, there is one work which is needful and speedful to travail in, and I hope an high plain way, as much as may be, in man's work to contemplation. And that is for a man to enter into himself, to know his own soul and the mights thereof, the fairness and the foulness of it. In this inward beholding thou shalt see the worship and dignity which it should have by kind of the first making, and thou shalt see the wretchedness and the mischief which thou art fallen into for sin. And of this sight shall come a desire with great longing in thine heart to recover again that dignity and worship which thou hast lost. Also thou shalt feel a loathing and a dread of thyself, with a great will to destroy and bear down thyself and all things that let thee from that dignity and joy. This is a ghostly travail hard and sharp in the beginning, whoso will quickly travail therein. For it is a travail in the soul against the ground of all sins little and much, which ground is naught else but a false misruled love of man to himself.

Out of this love, as Saint Austin saith, springeth all manner of sin deadly and venial; and soothly until this ground be well ransacked and deep delved, and as it were near dried up by outcasting of all fleshly and worldly dreads and loves, a soul may never feel ghostly the burning love of Jesus Christ, nor have the homeliness of His gracious presence nor clear sight of ghostly things by light of understanding. This is the travail whereby it behoveth a man to draw his heart and his mind from fleshly love and the liking of all earthly creatures, from vain thoughts and from fleshly imaginations, and out from the love and vicious feeling of himself, that the soul may find no rest in any fleshly thoughts nor earthly affection. Then, inasmuch as the soul may not find his ghostly rest in the love and in the sight of Jesus Christ, needs must that it suffer pain. This travail is some deal strait and narrow, nevertheless I hope it is the way which Christ taught to them that would be His perfect lovers in the gospel, saying thus: *Strive ye to enter by a strait gate, for the way that leadeth to heaven is narrow, and few men find it.** And how strait this way is, our Lord telleth in another place thus: *Whoso will come after Me, let him forsake himself and hate his own soul;* that is to say, forsake all fleshly

* Luke xiii 24.

love and hate his own fleshly life and vain liking of all his bodily wits for love of Me; *and take the cross*, that is to say, suffer the pain of this world awhile, *and then follow Me*,* that is to say, in contemplation of My manhood and of My godhead. This is a strait way and a narrow, that no bodily thing may pass through it, for it is a slaying of all sin, as Saint Paul saith: *Slay your members upon earth*;† not the members of the body but of the soul, as uncleanness, lust, and unskilful love to yourself and to earthly things. Therefore, as thy travail hath been heretofore to withstand bodily sins and open temptations of the enemy, as it were from without; right so it behoveth thee now, in this ghostly work within thyself, to destroy and break the ground of sin in thyself, as much as thou mayest. And that thou mayest the more readily bring it about, I shall tell thee as methinketh.

* Matt. xvi 24. † Col. iii 5.

CHAPTER XLIII

HOW A MAN SHALL KNOW THE WORTHINESS AND THE WORSHIP OF HIS SOUL THAT HE HAD FIRST OF GOD; AND WHAT WRETCHEDNESS AND MISCHIEF IT IS FALLEN INTO FOR SIN

THE soul of a man is a life made of three mights—mind, reason, and will—to the image and likeness of the Blessed Trinity. Inasmuch as the mind was made mighty and steadfast, by the virtue of the Father Almighty, to behold Him without forgetting, distracting or letting of any creature, so it hath likeness of the Father. The reason was made bright and clear without error or darkness, as perfectly as a soul in a body unglorified might have; and so it hath the likeness of the Son, which is endless wisdom. And the love and the will was made clean, burning into God without beastly love of the flesh or of any creature, by the sovereign goodness of God the Holy Ghost, and so it hath the likeness of the Holy Ghost which is blessed love. So that a man's soul—which may be called a made trinity—was fulfilled in mind, sight, and love, of the unmade blessed Trinity which is our Lord. This is the dignity, the state, and the worship of a man's soul by kind of the first making.

This state thou haddest in Adam before the first sin of man. But when Adam sinned, choosing love and delight in himself and in creatures, he lost all his worship and his dignity (and thou also in him), and fell from that blessed trinity into a foul, dark, wretched trinity; that is into forgetting of God and unknowing of Him, and into a beastly liking of himself. And that unskilfully, for as David saith in the psalter: *A man when he was in worship knew it not,** and therefore he lost it and was made like a beast. See now then the wretchedness of thy soul; for as thy mind was some time stable in God, right so it hath now forgotten Him and seeketh its rest in creatures—now from one, now from another—and never may find full rest, for it hath lost Him in whom is full rest. And right so it is of reason, and the love also which was clean in ghostly savour and sweetness, now it is turned into a foul beastly lust and liking in itself and in creatures, and in fleshly savours both in the wits, as in gluttony and lechery, and in imagining, as in pride, vainglory, and covetousness. Insomuch that thou mayest scarcely do any deed, without being defiled with vainglory; nor mayest thou well use any of thy five wits cleanly in any creature delectable, without thy heart being taken and inflamed

* Ps. xlviii 20.

with a vain lust and liking of it, which putteth out the love of God from the heart as in feeling and ghostly savour, that it may not come therein. Every man that liveth in spirit knoweth well all this. This is the wretchedness of the soul and the mischief for the first sin of man, without all other wretchedness and sins which thou hast wilfully put thereto. And wit thou well that though thou haddest never done sin with thy body, deadly nor venial, but only this that is called original, for it is the first sin, and naught else but losing of thy rightfulness in which thou wast made, thou shouldst never have been saved if our Lord Jesus Christ by His precious passion had not delivered thee and restored thee again.

CHAPTER XLIV

HOW EVERY MAN MAY BE SAVED BY THE PASSION OF CHRIST, BE HE NEVER SO WICKED

And, therefore, if thou thinkest that I have herebefore spoken too high to thee, for thou mayest not take it nor fulfil it as I have said or shall say, I will now fall down to thee as low as thou wilt, for my profit as well as for thine. Therefore say I thus: though thou be never so much a wretch, hast thou done

never so much sin, forsake thyself and all thy works good and bad, cry mercy and ask only salvation by virtue of this precious passion meekly and trustfully, and without doubt thou shalt have it. And from this original sin and from all other thou shalt be saved; yea, and thou shalt be saved as an anker* enclosed. And not only thou, but all Christian souls which trust upon this passion and meek themselves, acknowledging their wretchedness, asking mercy and forgiveness and the fruit of this precious passion only, lowing themselves to the sacraments of Holy Church—though it be so that they have been encumbered with sin all their lifetime, and never had feeling of ghostly savour or sweetness, or ghostly knowing of God—they shall in this faith and in their good will by virtue of this precious passion of our Lord Jesus Christ be saved and come to the bliss of heaven. All this thou knowest well, but yet it liketh me to say it. See here the endless mercy of our Lord, how low He falleth to thee and to me and to all sinful caitiffs. Ask mercy, therefore, and have it. Thus said the prophet in the person of our Lord: *Every man, what that he be, that calleth the name of God*, that is to say, who asketh salvation by Jesus and His passion, *he shall be saved.*† This courtesy of our Lord some

* Anker—*i.e.*, anchorite. † Joel ii 31.

men take well, and are saved thereby, and some men in trust of this mercy and this courtesy lie still in their sin and ween to have it when they list; and then may they not, for they are taken ere they wit, and so they damn themselves.

But then sayest thou "If this be sooth, then wonder I greatly for that which I find in some holy men's books. Some say as I understand that he that cannot love this blessed name Jesus, nor find nor feel in it ghostly joy and delectable, with ghostly sweetness, in the bliss of heaven he shall be alien, and never shall he come thereto." Soothly these words when I read them astonied me, and made me greatly afraid, for I hope, as thou sayest, that by the mercy of our Lord they shall be saved by keeping of the commandments and by very repentance for their evil living beforedone, who never felt ghostly sweetness nor inly savour in the name of Jesus. And, therefore, I marvel me the more that they say contrary hereto as it seemeth. As unto this I may say as methinketh that their saying, if it be well understood, is sooth, and not contrary to that I have said. For this name Jesus is naught else to say in English but healer or health. Now every man that liveth in this wretched life is ghostly sick, for there is no man that liveth without sin, which is ghostly

sickness; as Saint John saith of himself and of other perfect men: *If we say that we have no sin, we beguile ourselves and there is no soothfastness in us.** And therefore he may never come to the joy of heaven until he be first made whole of this ghostly sickness. But this ghostly health may no man have that hath the use of reason, unless he desire it and love it, and have delight therein, inasmuch as he hopeth to get it. Now the name of Jesus is nothing else but this ghostly health; wherefore it is sooth that they say that there may no man be saved unless he love and like in the name of Jesus, for there may no man be ghostly whole unless he love and desire ghostly health. For right as if a man were bodily sick, there were no earthly thing so dear nor so needful to him, nor so much to be desired by him as bodily health, for though thou wouldest give him all the riches and worships of this world and not make him whole if thou mightest, thou pleasest him not. Right so it is to a man that is sick ghostly and feeleth the pain of ghostly sickness. Nothing is so dear nor so needful nor so much coveted of him as is ghostly health, that is Jesus, without which all the joys of heaven may not like him. All this is skill, as I hope, why our Lord, when He took manhood for our salvation, would

* 1 John i 8.

not be called by any name that betokened His endless being or His might or His righteousness, but only by that which betokened the cause of His coming and was the salvation of man's soul; which salvation betokeneth this name Jesus. Therefore by this it seemeth sooth that there shall no man be saved unless he love salvation only, to have it through the mercy of our Lord Jesus and by the merits of His passion, which love he may have that liveth and dieth in the lowest degree of charity. Also I may say on that other part that he that cannot love this blessed name Jesus with ghostly mirth, nor increase* in it with heavenly melody here, he shall never have nor feel in heaven the fulhead of sovereign joy, which he that might in this life by abundance of perfect charity enjoy in Jesus shall feel and have; and so may their saying be understood. Nevertheless, he shall be safe and have full meed in the sight of God, if he, in this life, be in the lowest degree of charity by keeping of God's commandments. For our Lord saith Himself thus: *In My Father's house are many sundry dwellings.*† Some are for perfect souls which in this life were fulfilled of charity and grace of the Holy Ghost, and sung praisings to God in contemplation of Him with wonderful sweetness

* Increase—*i.e.*, joy. † John xiv 2.

and heavenly savour. These souls, because they had most charity, shall have highest meed in the bliss of heaven; for these are called God's darlings. Other souls that are not disposed to contemplation of God, nor had the fulness of charity as apostles or martyrs had in the beginning of Holy Church, shall have lower meed in the bliss of heaven; for these are called God's friends. Thus calleth our Lord in Holy Writ chosen souls, saying thus: *My friends, eat ye: and my darlings, be ye drunken.** As if our Lord said thus: Ye that are my friends, for ye kept my commandments and set My love before the love of the world, and loved Me more than any earthly thing, ye shall be fed with ghostly food of the bread of life. But ye that are My darlings, in that ye not only kept My commandments, but also of your own free will fulfilled My counsels, and over that loved Me only and entirely with all the mights of your soul, and burned in My love with all ghostly delight—as did principally the apostles and martyrs and all other souls that might by grace come to the gift of perfection—ye shall be made drunken with the highest and freshest wine in My cellar, that is the sovereign joy of love in heaven.

* Cant. v 1.

CHAPTER XLV

THAT A MAN SHOULD BE BUSY TO REGAIN HIS WORTHINESS, AND REFORM AGAIN IN HIMSELF THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

NEVERTHELESS, though this be sooth of the endless mercy of God unto thee and to me and to all mankind, we shall not therefore in trust of this be more reckless wilfully in our living, but the more busy to please Him; namely now since we are restored again in hope by the passion of our Lord to the dignity and bliss which we had lost by Adam's sin. And though we may never get it fully here, yet we should desire that we may recover here living a figure and a likeness of the dignity, that our soul might be reformed as it were in a shadow by grace to the image of the Trinity, which we had by kind and after shall have fully in bliss. For that is the life which is very contemplative, to begin here in that feeling of love and ghostly knowing of God by opening of the ghostly eye, which shall never be lost nor taken away, but the same shall be fulfilled otherwise in the bliss of heaven. Thus behight our Lord to Mary Magdalene which was contemplative, and said thus of her: *Mary hath chosen the better part*, that is the love of God in contemplation, for *it shall never be taken*

*away from her.** I say not that thou mayest here living recover so whole nor so perfect cleanness and innocence, knowing and loving of God, as thou haddest first, nor as thou shalt have; nor that thou mayest escape all the wretchedness and pains of sin; nor that thou, living in deadly flesh, mayest destroy and quench all wholly the false vain love in thyself, nor flee all venial sins so that they will not—unless they be stopped by great fervour of charity—spring out of thine heart as water doth from a stinking well. But I would that, if thou mayest not fully quench it, thou mayest somewhat slake it and come to the cleanness of soul as near as thou mayest. For our Lord behight the children of Israel when he led them into the land of behest, and in figure of them all Christian men thus: *As much land as thou mayest tread upon with thy foot* of very desire, *so much here shalt thou have in the land of behest*,† that is in the bliss of heaven when thou comest thither.

CHAPTER XLVI

HOW JESUS SHALL BE SOUGHT, DESIRED, AND FOUND

SEEK then what thou hast lost, that thou mayest find it. Well I wot, whoso might once have an inward sight of a little of that

* Luke x 42. † Deut. xi 24.

dignity and ghostly fairness which a soul had by kind and shall have by grace, he should loathe and despise in his heart all the bliss, the liking, and the fairness of this world as the stench of carrion; and he shall never have will to do other deed night and day—saving the frailty and the bare need of the bodily kind—but desire, mourn and pray, and seek how he may come again thereto. Nevertheless, inasmuch as thou hast not yet seen what it is fully, because thy ghostly eye is not yet opened, I shall tell thee one word for all in the which thou shalt seek, desire, and find it; for in that one word is all that thou hast lost. This word is Jesus. I mean not this word Jesus painted upon the wall, or written with letters on the book, or formed with lips in sound of the mouth, or feigned in thy heart by travail of thy mind; for in this wise may a man out of charity find Him. But I mean Jesus Christ that blessed Person, God and Man, son of the Virgin Mary, whom this name betokeneth; that is all goodness, endless wisdom, love and sweetness, thy joy, thy worship and thy everlasting bliss, thy God, thy Lord and thy salvation.

Then if it be so, that thou feelest a great desire in thine heart to Jesus, either by mind of this name Jesus, or by mind and saying of any other word, or in prayer or in any deed that thou dost, which desire is so much that

it putteth out, as it were, by strength all other thoughts and desires of the world and of the flesh, that they may not rest in thine heart, then seekest thou well thy Lord Jesus. And when thou feelest this desire to God, to Jesus—all is one—holpen and comforted by a ghostly might, insomuch that it is turned into love and affection, ghostly savour and sweetness, light and knowing of soothfastness, so much that for the time thy thought is set upon nothing that is made, nor feeleth any stirring of vain glory, either of itself or any other evil affection, for they may not appear that time, but only is enclosed, rested, softed, anointed in Jesus, then hast thou found somewhat of Jesus; not Him as He is, but a shadow of Him. For the better that thou findest Him, the more shalt thou desire Him. Then by what manner of prayer or meditation or occupation that thou mayest have greatest and cleanest desire to Him and most feeling of Him, by that occupation thou seekest Him best and best findest Him. Therefore, if it come to thy mind, as it were, to ask what thou hast lost and what thou seekest, lift up thy mind and the desire of thy heart to Jesus Christ, though thou be blind and mayest see naught of His godhead; and say that Him thou hast lost and Him thou wouldest have, and nothing but Him, to be with Him where He is; none other

joy, none other bliss in heaven nor in earth but Him. And though it be so that thou feel Him in devotion or in knowing, or in any other gift whatever it be, rest not there as though thou haddest fully found Jesus, but forget that thou hast found and alway be desiring after Jesus more and more to find Him better, as though thou haddest right naught found of Him. For wit thou well that what thou feelest of Him, be it never so much—yea, though thou wert ravished into the third heaven with Paul—yet hast thou not found Jesus as He is in His joy. Know thou or feel thou never so much of Him, He is yet above it. And, therefore, if thou wilt fully find Him as He is in the bliss of loving, cease never while thou livest of ghostly desiring.

CHAPTER XLVII

WHAT PROFIT IT IS TO HAVE THE DESIRE OF JESUS

SOOTHLY I had liefer feel and have a soothfast desire and a clean love in mine heart to my Lord Jesus Christ, though I see right little of Him with my ghostly eye, than to have without this desire all bodily presence of all men living, all visions or revelations of angels appearing, songs and soundings,

savours and smells, burnings and any likings or bodily feelings, and—shortly to say—all the joy of heaven and of earth which I might have without this desire to my Lord Jesus. David the prophet felt as I say, as I understand, when he said thus: *Lord what thing is to me in heaven, or what would I without Thee above earth?** As if he had said thus: Lord Jesus, what heavenly joy is liking to me without desire of Thee whiles I am in earth, or without love of Thee when I come to heaven? As who saith: Right none! Then if thou wilt feel anything of Him bodily or ghostly, covet not but to feel soothfastly a desire of His grace and of His merciful presence that thou thinkest that thine heart may find none other rest in nothing but Him. Thus coveted David when he said thus: *My soul coveted the desire of Thy righteousness in every time.*† Seek then, as David did, desire by desire; and if thou mayest feel by desire, in prayers and in meditations, the homely presence of Jesus Christ in thy soul, bind thine heart fast thereto, that it fall not therefrom, and if thou stumble that thou mayest find Him again.

* Ps. lxxii 25. † Ps. cxviii 20.

CHAPTER XLVIII

WHERE AND WITH WHAT THING JESUS SHALL BE SOUGHT AND FOUND

SEEK then Jesus, whom thou hast lost. He will be sought, and He may then somewhat be found, for He saith Himself: *Every man that seeketh shall find.** The seeking is travaillous, but the finding is blissful. Do, therefore, after the counsel of the Wise Man, if thou wilt find Him: *If thou seek wisdom*, which is Jesus, *as silver and gold, and delvest deep thereafter, thou shalt find it.*† It behoveth thee to delve deep in thy heart, for therein is He hid, and cast out full cleanly all loves and likings, sorrows and dreads of all earthly things; and so shalt thou find wisdom, Jesus. Be thou then like to the woman of the gospel, of whom our Lord saith thus: *What woman is there that hath lost a drachma, that she will not light a lantern, and cast her house upside down, and seek till she find it?* As who saith: None. *And when she hath found it she calleth her friends to her, and saith to them thus: Make mirth with me and melody, for I have found the drachma that I had lost.*‡ This drachma is Jesus that thou hast lost, and if thou wilt

* Matt. vii 8. † Prov. ii 45.
‡ Luke xv 8, 9.

find Him, light up a lantern, that is God's word, as David saith: Lord, *Thy word to my feet is a lantern.** By this lantern shalt thou see where He is, and how thou shalt find Him. And, if thou wilt, thou mayest light up another lantern, that is the reason of thy soul, for as our Lord saith: *The lantern of thy body is thy bodily eye.*† Right so it may be said that the lantern of the soul is reason, by which the soul may see all ghostly things. By this lantern mayest thou find Jesus, and that is sooth if thou hold the lantern up from underneath the bushel, as our Lord saith: *There is no man that lighteth a lantern to set it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick.*‡ That is to say, thy reason shall not be overlaid with earthly business nor vain thoughts and earthly affections, but aye upward above all earthly things, as much as thou mayest. And if thou do so, thou shalt see then all the dust, and all the filth and small motes in thy house (for why, He is light), that is to say all the fleshly loves and dreads in thy soul. Not all, for as David said: *Who may know all his trespasses?*§ As whoso saith: No man. And thou shalt cast out of thine heart all such sins, and sweep thy soul clean with the besom of the dread of God, and with the water of thine eyes

* Ps. cxviii 105.
† Matt. vi 22.
‡ Matt. v 15.
§ Ps. xxiv 12.

wash it, and so shalt thou find thy drachma, Jesus. He is drachma, He is penny, He is thine heritage. This drachma will not be found so lightly, as it is said; for this work is not of one hour nor of one day, but many days and years with much sweat and swink* of body and travail of the soul. And if thou cease not, but seek busily, sorrow and sigh deep, mourn stilly and stoop low, till thine eyes water for anguish and for pain because thou hast lost thy treasure Jesus, at last, when He will, thou shalt find thy drachma, Jesus. And if thou find Him, as I have said, that is, if thou mayest in cleanness of conscience feel the homely and the peaceful presence of that blessed man Jesus Christ as a shadow or a glimmering of Him, then mayest thou, if thou wilt, call all thy friends to thee to make mirth with thee and melody, because thou hast found thy drachma, Jesus.

CHAPTER XLIX

WHERE JESUS IS LOST AND FOUND AGAIN THROUGH HIS MERCY

See now, therefore, the courtesy and the mercy of Jesus. Thou hadst lost Him, but where? Soothly in thy house, that is in thy soul. That is to say, if thou hadst lost all the reason of thy soul by the first

* Swink—*i.e.*, toil.

sin, thy soul should never have found Him again; but He left to thee thy reason, and so He is in thy soul, and never shall be lost out of it. Nevertheless, thou art never the nearer to Him till thou hast found Him. He is in thee, though He be lost from thee; but thou art not in Him till thou hast found Him. This then was His mercy, that He would not suffer Him to be lost only where He may be found. It needeth not to run to Rome nor to Jerusalem to seek Him there, but turn thy thought into thine own soul where He is hid, as the prophet saith: *Soothly Lord, thou art an hid God,** and seek Him there. Thus He saith Himself in the gospel: *The kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure hid in a field, which when a man findeth, for joy of it he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field.*† Jesus is treasure hid in thy soul; then if thou mightest find Him in thy soul, and thy soul in Him, I am sure for joy of it thou wouldest give the liking of all earthly thing to have it. Jesus sleepeth in thine heart ghostly, as He did sometime bodily, when He was in the ship with His disciples, but they for dread of perishing wakened Him, and soon after He saved them from the tempest. Do thou so stir Him by prayer and wake Him with great crying of desire, and He shall soon rise and help thee.

* Isa. xlv 15. † Matt. xiii 44.

CHAPTER L

WHAT LETTETH A MAN FROM HEARING AND SEEING JESUS WITHIN HIMSELF

BUT nevertheless I hope better that thou sleepest to Him more often than He doth to thee; for He calleth thee full oft with His sweet privy voice, and stirreth thine heart full stilly, that thou shouldest leave all other jangling of all other vanities in thy soul and only take care of Him for to hear Him speak. Thus saith David of our Lord: *My daughter hear and see and bow down thine ear to me, and forget the folk* of thy worldly thoughts and the house of thy fleshly and kindly affections.* Lo! here mayest thou see how our Lord calleth thee and all other which will hearken to Him. What letteth thee then, that thou mayest neither see Him nor hear Him? Soothly there is so much din and crying in thine heart of vain thoughts and fleshly desires that thou mayest neither hear Him nor see Him. Therefore put away unrestful din and break the love of sin and of vanity, and bring in thine heart love of virtues and full charity, and then shalt thou hear thy Lord speak to thee.

* Ps. xliv 10.

CHAPTER LI

THAT MEEKNESS AND CHARITY ARE THE SPECIAL LIVERY OF JESUS, THROUGH THE WHICH MAN'S SOUL IS REFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF HIM

As long as Jesus findeth not His image reformed in thee, He is strange and far from thee. Shape thee, therefore, to be arrayed in His likeness, that is in meekness and charity, the which are His liveries, and then will He homely know thee and show to thee His privities. Thus said He Himself to His disciples: *Whoso loveth Me he shall be loved of My Father, and I shall show Myself unto him.** There is no virtue nor any work that thou mayest do that may make thee like to our Lord without meekness and charity, for these two are specially to God most lief. And that seemeth well in the gospel, where our Lord speaketh of meekness: *Learn of Me,* He said, not to go barefoot, nor to go into desert and there to fast forty days, not yet also to choose you disciples, but *learn of Me meekness, for I am mild and meek in heart.*† Also of charity He saith thus: *This is My bidding, that ye love you together, as I loved you; for in that shall men know you for My*

* John xiv 21. † Matt. xi 29.

*disciples.** Not because ye work miracles or cast out devils, or preach or teach, unless each of you love one other in charity. And if thou wilt be like to Him, have meekness and charity. That charity is, as thou knowest well; Love thine even-Christian as thyself.

CHAPTER LII

HOW A MAN SHALL SEE THE GROUND OF SIN WITHIN HIMSELF

Now hast thou heard a little what thy soul is, and what worship it had, and how thou lost it; and also I have told thee that this worship might by grace and busy travail somewhat be recovered again in part of feeling. Now shall I tell thee feebly as I can how thou shalt be able to enter into thyself to see the ground of sin, and to destroy it as much as thou mayest, and so shalt thou be able to recover a part of thy dignity. Thou shalt cease for a time from all bodily works, from all outward business as thou mayest well. Then shalt thou draw into thyself thy thought from thy bodily wits, that thou take no heed what thou hearest or seest or feelest; so that the point of thy heart be not fixed on them. And after this draw in nearer thy thought from all

* John xiii 34, 35.

manner of imaginings, if thou mayest, of all bodily things, and from all thoughts of thy bodily deeds before done, or of other men's deeds. This is little mastery to do when thou hast devotion; but thou shalt do it when thou hast no devotion, for then it is right much the harder. And set thine intent and thy full purpose upon it, as if thou wouldest not seek, nor feel, nor find aught but only the grace and the ghostly presence of Jesus. This is travaillous, for vain thoughts will press thick into thine heart to draw thy thought down to them; and if thou do thus thou shalt find somewhat, not Jesus whom thou seekest, but only a naked mind of His name. What then? Soothly thus thou shalt find but a dark image and a painful of thine own soul, which hath neither light of knowing nor feeling of love nor liking. This image, if thou behold it wittily,* is all umbelapped† with black stinking clothes of sin: as pride, envy, ire, accidie,‡ covetousness, gluttony, and lechery. This is not the image of Jesus, but it is an image of sin; as Saint Paul calleth it, a body of sin and a body of death. This image and this black shadow thou bearest about with thee wheresoever thou goest. Out of this spring many great

* Wittily—*i.e.*, wisely.
† Umbelapped—*i.e.*, surrounded.
‡ Accidie—*i.e.*, sloth.

streams of sin, and small also. Right as out of the image of Jesus, if it were reformed in thee, beams of ghostly light should sty up into heaven with ghostly desires, clean affections, wise thoughts and all honesty* of virtues; right so out of this image spring stirrings of pride, of envy and of such other, the which cast thee down from the honesty of a man into a beast's likeness.

CHAPTER LIII

UNTO WHAT THING THE IMAGE OF SIN IS LIKE, AND WHAT IT IS IN ITSELF

Now peradventure thou beginnest to think, unto what thing this image should be like. And therefore that thou shouldst not long study thereabout, I tell thee that it is like to no bodily thing. What is it then? sayest thou. Soothly it is naught, and that mayest thou find if thou wilt assay as I have said to thee. Draw into thyself thy thought from all bodily things, and then shalt thou find right naught wherein thy soul may rest. This naught is naught else but darkness of conscience, a lacking of love and of light; as sin is naught but a wanting of God. If it so were that the ground of sin were much abated and dried up in thee, and thy soul

* Honesty—*i.e.*, purity.

were reformed aright to the image of Jesus, then, if thou drew into thyself thy heart, thou shouldest not find naught, but thou shouldest find Jesus; not only the naked mind of His name, but Jesus Christ in conscience readily teaching thee. Then shouldest thou find light of understanding, and no darkness of uncunning; thou shouldest find love and liking of Him, and no pain of bitterness and heaviness. But because thou art not reformed, therefore when thy soul cometh in from all bodily things, and findeth naught but darkness and heaviness, thou thinkest it an hundred winters till thou be out again by some bodily delight or vain thought, and that is no wonder. For whoso cometh home unto his house, and findeth nothing therein but stink and smoke and a chiding wife, he would soon run out of it. Right so thy soul, when it findeth no comfort in itself but black smoke of ghostly blindness and great chiding of fleshly thoughts crying upon thee that thou mayest not be in peace, soothly it is soon weary till it be out again. This is the darkness of conscience.

CHAPTER LIV

WHOSO WILL FIND JESUS, IT BEHOVETH HIM ABIDINGLY TO TRAVAIL IN GHOSTLY DARKNESS AGAINST THE IMAGE OF SIN

NEVERTHELESS in this dark conscience it behoveth thee to swink and sweat—that is to say, to draw thy thought from all bodily things as much as thou mayest. And then, when thou findest right naught but sorrow and pain and blindness in this darkness, if thou wilt find Jesus it behoveth thee to suffer the pain of this dark conscience and abide awhile therein. And here it behoveth thee to beware that thou take Jesus Christ into thy thought against this darkness in thy mind, and by busy prayer and fervent desire to God, not setting the point of thy thought in that naught beforesaid but in Jesus Christ which thou desirest, think stiffly on the passion and on His meekness, and through might of Him thou shalt arise. Do as though thou wouldest bear down and go through it. Thou shalt dread and loathe this darkness and this naught right as the devil, and thou shalt despise it and burst through it, for within this naught is Jesus hid in His joy, whom thou mayest not find by thy seeking unless thou pass the darkness of this conscience. This is the ghostly travail that I speak of,

and this travail is the cause of all this writing, to stir thee thereto if thou feel grace. This darkness of conscience and this naught that I speak of is the image of the first Adam. Saint Paul knew it well, for he said thus of it: *As we have herebefore borne the image of the earthly man, that is the first Adam, right so that we might now bear the image of the heavenly man,** which is Jesus, the second Adam. He bare this image oft full heavy, for it was so cumberous to him that he cried out on it saying thus: *O who shall deliver me from this body* and this image *of death?* And then he comforteth himself and other also, thus: *The grace of God by Jesus Christ.*†

CHAPTER LV

WHAT IS PROPERLY THE IMAGE OF SIN, AND WHAT COMETH OUT THEREOF

Now I have told thee a little of this image, how it is naught. Nevertheless, if it be far from thy knowing how it might be an image—for naught is but naught, and so thou mightest not lightly understand it—I shall tell thee more openly of this image as methinketh. This image is a false misruled love unto thyself, and from this come all manner of sins by seven rivers which are

* 1 Cor. xv 49. † Rom. vii 24, 25,

these: pride, envy, ire, accidie, covetousness, gluttony, and lechery. Lo! this is somewhat that thou mayest feel. By one of these rivers runneth out all manner of sin and putteth thee out of charity if it be deadly sin, or letteth the fervour of charity if it be venial. Now mayest thou grope* that this image is not naught, but it is much of bad, for it is a great spring of love unto thyself with such seven rivers as I have said. But now sayest thou: How may this be sooth? I have forsaken the world and I am stoken† in a house, I meddle with no man, I chide not, I strive not, I neither buy nor sell, I have no worldly business, but by the mercy of God I keep me chaste and withhold me from delights. And besides this I pray, I wake, I travail bodily and ghostly as I may. How should then this image be so much in me as thou speakest of? As to this I answer and grant to thee that I hope thou dost all these works and more thereto, and yet may it be sooth as I say. Thou art busy upon thy might to stop the rivers without, but the spring within haply thou leavest whole. Thou art like to a man which had in his yard‡ a stinking well with many runnings from it. He went and stopped the runnings and left the spring whole, and weened all

* Grope—*i.e.*, feel. † Stoken—*i.e.*, enclosed.
‡ Yard—*i.e.*, garden.

had been safe. But the water sprang up at the ground of the well and stood still, so much that it corrupted all the fairness of his garden, and yet ran there no water out. Right so it may be with thee. If it be so that thou hast by grace stopped the rivers of this image without, so much is well: but beware of the spring within. Soothly unless thou stop and cleanse that as much as thou mayest, it will corrupt all the flowers of the garden of thy soul, show they never so fair outwardly in sight of men. But now sayest thou: Whereby shall I know that the ground is stopped if I travail about it? As unto this I shall tell by assay, how thou shalt know if this image be in thee, and how much it is in thee, and thereby shalt thou know how much it is stopped and how little also in thee. And inasmuch as pride is the principal river, I shall tell thee thereof first.

CHAPTER LVI

WHAT PRIDE IS, AND WHEN IT IS SIN

PRIDE is naught else, as clerks say, but love of thine own excellence, that is of thine own worship. The more thou lovest and likest in thine own worship, therefore, the more is the pride, and so the more is this image in thee. If thou feel in thine heart a stirring of pride,

that thou art holier, wiser, better, and more virtuous than another is, that God hath given thee grace to serve Him better than others do, and thou thinkest all others beneath thee and thee above them; or any other thought of thyself which showeth to the sight of thy soul an excellence and an overpassing of other men or women, and of this stirring thou feelest love and delight and vain pleasing in thyself that thou art so: this is a token that thou bearest this black image which, if it be privy from men's eyes, nevertheless it showeth openly in God's sight. But now sayest thou that thou mayest not flee such stirrings of pride, for often thou feelest them against thy will, and, therefore, thou holdest them no sin; or if they be sin, they are but venial. As to this I say thus, that the feeling of these stirrings of pride or of any other which spring out, either of the corruption of this foul image or by incasting of the enemy, it is no sin inasmuch as thou feelest them. And that is a grace and privilege by virtue of the passion of Jesus Christ granted to all Christian men baptised in water and in the Holy Ghost; for soothly to Jews and Saracens which trow not in Jesus Christ all such stirrings are deadly sins. For Saint Paul saith: *All that is done without troth in Christ is deadly sin.** But we Christian men have this privilege of

* Rom. xiv 23.

His mercy that such feelings are no sin, but they are pain of original sin. Nevertheless, when, by negligence and by blindness of thyself, this feeling is received unawarely in thy thought, and turned into love and liking, then is there sin more or less after the measure of the love, sometime venial and sometime deadly. When it is venial and when deadly, fully can I not tell thee, nevertheless a little shall I say as methinketh.

CHAPTER LVII

WHEN PRIDE IS DEADLY SIN, AND HOW IT IS IN FLESHLY LIVING MEN DEADLY SIN

WHEN the stirring of pride is received and turned into liking, so much that the heart chooseth it for a full rest and a full delight, and seeketh none other end but only liking therein, then is this pride deadly sin; for he maketh and chooseth this delight as his god without withstanding of reason and of will, and, therefore, it is deadly sin. But now sayest thou: What fool is he that would choose pride as his god? No man that liveth would do so. As unto this I say that I cannot tell thee in special who sinneth in pride deadly, but in general I shall tell thee. There are two manners of pride, the one is bodily pride, the other is ghostly pride. Bodily pride is of

fleshly living men, ghostly pride is of hypocrites and heretics. These three sin deadly in pride. I mean of such a fleshly living man as Saint Paul speaketh of thus: *If ye live after your flesh, ye shall die.** Then say I thus: that a worldly man which loveth and seeketh principally the worship of himself, and chooseth the liking of it as the rest of his heart and the end of bliss, he sinneth deadly. But now sayest thou: Who would choose love of his worship instead of God? As to this I say thus; that he that loveth his worship so as to seem better and greater of estate than any other, and travaileth about it as much as he may, if he love it so much that, for the getting of it, the keeping and the saving of it, he breaketh the commandment of God, or breaketh love and charity to his even-Christian, or is ready and in full will to break it rather than that he should forbear his worship or lose it, either of his name or of his state, or of fulfilling of his will, soothly he sinneth deadly; for he loveth his worship and chooseth it more than the love of God and of his even-Christian. And yet, nevertheless, the man that sinneth thus deadly, he would say with his mouth that he would not choose pride for his god; but he beguileth himself, for he chooseth it by his deed. Nevertheless,

* Rom. viii 13.

another worldly man that loveth worship of himself and pursueth thereafter, if he love it not so much that he would for the getting or the saving of it do a deadly sin or break charity to his even-Christian, he sinneth not deadly but venially, more or less, after the measure of his love and his liking, with other circumstances.

CHAPTER LVIII

HOW PRIDE IS IN HERETICS DEADLY SIN

An heretic sinneth deadly in pride, for he chooseth his rest and his delight in his own opinion and his own saying, for he weeneth that it is sooth—which opinion is against God and Holy Church—and therefore sinneth he in pride deadly, for he loveth himself and his own will and wit so much that, though it be openly against the ordinance of Holy Church, he will not leave it, but resteth him therein as in soothfastness, and so maketh it his god; but he beguileth himself. For God and Holy Church are so oned and accorded together that whoso doth against one he doth against both. And, therefore, he that saith he loveth God and keepeth His biddings, and despiseth Holy Church and setteth at naught the laws and the ordinances of it made by the head and

the sovereign in governance of all Christian men, he lieth. He chooseth not God, but he chooseth the love of himself contrary to the love of God, and so he sinneth deadly. And in that he weeneth most to please God, he most displeaseth Him; for he is blind and will not see. Of this blindness and this false resting of an heretic in his own feeling, speaketh the Wise Man thus: *There is a way which seemeth to a man rightful, and the last end of it bringeth him to endless death.** This way specially is called heresy, for other fleshly sinners, that sin deadly and lie therein, commonly suppose amiss of themselves, and feel biting in conscience that they go not in the right way. But an heretic supposeth that he doth well and teacheth well, and no other man so well; and so weeneth he that his way were the right way, and therefore feeleth he no biting of conscience nor meekness in heart. And soothly unless God send him meekness of His mercy, at the last end he goeth to hell; and nevertheless yet weeneth he to have done well and get him the bliss of heaven for his teaching.

* Prov. xiv 12.

CHAPTER LIX

HOW PRIDE IS IN HYPOCRITES DEADLY SIN

THE hypocrite also sinneth deadly in pride. He is an hypocrite that chooseth vain joy of himself as the rest and the full delight of his heart, upon this wise. When a man doth many manner of good deeds bodily and ghostly, and there is put into his mind by suggestion of the enemy a beholding of himself and his good deeds, how good, how holy he is, how worthy in men's doom, and how high in God's sight above other men, he perceiveth this stirring and receiveth it wilfully, for he weeneth it good and of God, inasmuch as it is sooth, for he doeth all these good deeds better than other men. And when it is received thus by assent of his will as good, there riseth from it in his heart a love and a delight of himself that he hath so much grace, so that it ravisheth his mind out of all other thoughts both ghostly and fleshly for the time, and setteth it in vain joy of himself as in a rest of his heart. This ravishing in ghostly pride is delectable, and therefore he keepeth it, holdeth it, and nourisheth it, as much as he may; for this love and vain delight he prayeth and waketh, he fasteth and weareth the hair, and doth other afflictions; and all these things grieve

him but little. He praiseth, he thanketh God sometimes with his mouth, and sometimes wringeth a tear out of his eye, and then he thinketh all safe enough. But soothly all this is for love of himself, which he chooseth and receiveth as it were love and joy in God; and in that is all the sin. He chooseth not sin wilfully as for sin, but he chooseth this delight and joy that he feeleth for his God, as the rest of his soul (the which is sin) without displeasing or withstanding of will. For he weeneth it were a joy in God and it is not so, and therefore sinneth he deadly. Job saith thus of an hypocrite: *The joy of an hypocrite is no more than a point, for if he sty into heaven with raising of his heart, and his head touch the skies, at the last end he shall be cast out as a dung-heap.** The joy of an hypocrite is but a point; for if he worship himself never so much, and joy in himself never so much all his lifetime, and depict himself with all his good deeds in sight and in praising of the world, at the last it is right naught but sorrow and pain. But now sayest thou, there are few such or else none that are so blind that they would hold and choose vain joy in themselves as joy in God. As unto this I cannot say, nor will not if I could, but one thing I tell thee, that there be many hypocrites, and nevertheless

* Job xx 5, 6.

they ween that they be none, and there be many that dread themselves as hypocrites and soothly they are none. Which is one and which is other God knoweth and none but He. Whoso will meekly dread, he shall not be beguiled, and whoso weeneth to be secure, he may lightly fall. For Saint Paul saith: *Whoso weeneth himself to be aught, when he is right naught, he beguileth himself.**

CHAPTER LX

HOW STIRRINGS OF PRIDE AND VAINGLORY IN GOOD MEN BE BUT VENIAL SINS

NEVERTHELESS a man or woman which disposeth him to live contemplative, if it be so that he forsaketh himself in will, and offer him wholly to God with a full general will that he would not sin in pride wittingly, nor have joy in himself wittingly, but only in God if he could and might, and after this full will offered to God he feeleth many stirrings of vainglory and delighteth in them for the time, for he perceiveth them not; this liking is but venial sin, and especially if it be so that, when he cometh to himself, he reproveth himself and withstandeth this stirring with displeasing of will, and asketh mercy and help of God. Then the liking

* Gal. vi 3.

which before was sin our Lord of His mercy soon forgiveth; and yet he shall have meed for his good travail in the withstanding of it. And that is a courtesy of our Lord granted to all those which are specially His servants and more homely of His court, as are those that for His love forsake in a good true will all worldly and all fleshly sin, and give themselves wholly body and soul unto His service in their might and in their cunning, as do principally ankers enclosed and all true religious, which for love of God and salvation of their souls enter into any religion* approved by Holy Church. Or else if it be so that they entered first for a worldly cause, as for their bodily sustenance or for some other such thing, if they repent them and turn it into a ghostly cause as for the service of God—these, as long as they keep this will and pursue it as they may upon their frailty, are true religious. Also what man or woman soever, in what degree he be in Holy Church—priest, clear or lewd man, widow or maiden or wife—that will for the love of God and the salvation of his soul forsake all the worship and likings of this world in his heart truly and fully betwixt God and him, and all wilful business of earthly things to the bare need, and offereth his will entirely to be His servant upon

* Religion—*i.e.*, religious state.

his might, by devout prayers and holy thoughts with other good deeds that he may do bodily and ghostly, and keepeth his will whole to God steadfastly; all these are specially God's servants in Holy Church. And for this good will and good purpose, that they have of the gift of God, they shall increase in grace and in charity here living. And they shall have for this special will a special meed in the bliss of heaven, before other chosen souls which offered not wholly their will and their body to God's service, neither openly nor privily as they did. All these, which I call God's servants and of His court more special, if they, by frailty or by uncunning when they feel such stirrings of vainglory, for the time delight therein, and perceive it not—because their reason and their will is letted by the liking that they feel that it may not see this stirring—they sin not deadly in the liking of vainglory. For that will which they have generally set in their heart before to please God and to forsake all manner of sin, if they knew it, keepeth them here in such stirrings, and in all other that come of frailty, that they sin not deadly, and shall keep them as long as the ground of the will is kept whole.

CHAPTER LXI

HOW DIVERS STATES IN HOLY CHURCH SHALL HAVE DIVERS MEEDS IN HEAVEN; AND OF TWO SPECIAL MEEDS IN HEAVEN

And over this I say more, in comfort of thee and all other having the state of anker enclosed, and also by the grace of God in comfort of them all that enter any religion approved by Holy Church, that all those who by the mercy of our Lord shall be saved, shall have a special meed and a singular worship in the bliss of heaven for their state of living, before other souls that had not that state in Holy Church, though they be never so holy. Which worship is better than all the worship of this world without comparison, for if thou mightest see what it were, thou wouldest not for all the worship of this world (though thou mightest have it without sin) change thy state either of anker or of religious, nor lose that singular meed in the bliss of heaven; which meed is called accidental meed. Nevertheless that other men mistake not this that I say, therefore I shall say it more openly. Thou shalt understand that there are two meeds in the bliss of heaven, which our Lord giveth to chosen souls. The one is sovereign and principal, as is loving and knowing of Him after the measure of charity

given of God to a soul living in deadly flesh. This meed is best and sovereign, for it is God Himself, and it is common to all the souls that shall be saved, in whatever state or degree they be living in Holy Church, more or less, after the quantity of their charity in this life. For he that most loveth God in charity, he shall have most meed in the bliss of heaven, for he shall most love God and know Him; and that is the sovereign meed. And as for this meed it shall fall that some manner of man or woman, as a lord or a lady, knight or squire, merchant or ploughman, or what degree he be in, man or woman, shall have more meed than some priest or friar, monk or canon or anker enclosed. And why? Soothly because he loved God more in charity. And other meed there is, that is secondary; which our Lord giveth for special good deeds that a man doth wilfully over that he is bounden to. Of three works principal do the doctors of Holy Church make mind—of martyrdom, preaching and maidenhood. These three works as for an excellence, inasmuch as they pass all others, shall have a special meed which they call aureole. And that is naught else but a singular worship and special token ordained of God in regard of that special deed, before other men that did not so, over the sovereign meed of love of God which is common to

them and to all others. Right so it is of all other special good deeds, the which, if they be done soothfastly, are specially acceptable to the sight of God, and in the doom of Holy Church they are excellent, as are enclosing of ankers done by the authority of Holy Church, also entering into any religion approved; and the stricter that the religion is, the more excellent is the deed in the doom of Holy Church. And also, after and beneath these, the taking of the order of priest, either for cure of men's souls, or to minister the sacraments of Holy Church, or else for singular devotion to please God and profit their even-Christians by the sacrifice of the precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Soothly they are special deeds and excellent, openly showed in the doom of Holy Church and in the sight of our Lord. When they are done soothfastly for God they are excellent, and they shall have special meed, each man in his degree, in the bliss of heaven. The state of bishop and prelate is above all these deeds, as for this accidental meed. That this is sooth it seemeth by Holy Writ, where it saith thus, in the prophet Daniel. The angel, when he had showed to Daniel the privities of God, said to him thus: *Go thou to the rest of thy bodily death, and thou shalt stand in thy sort* as a prophet at the last*

* Sort—*i.e.*, lot, destiny.

day.* And soothly, as Daniel shall stand as a prophet at the last day of doom and have the worship and the excellence of a prophet over the sovereign blessed meed of love and sight of God, right so shalt thou stand in thy sort as an anker in that sort, and a religious in the sort of religion, and so of other excellent deeds, and have a singular worship passing other men at the day of doom.

CHAPTER LXII

A SHORT STIRRING TO MEEKNESS AND TO CHARITY

Now by these words thou wilt, if thou wilt trow them, conceive comfort for thy degree of living, and also matter of meekness. For though it be so that thou shalt have so much meed specially for thy state of living, if thou be saved; nevertheless, it may be that there is many a wife and many a worldly woman shall be nearer to God than thou, and more shall love God and better know Him than thou shalt for all thy state. And that ought to be a shame for thee, unless thou be busy to get love and charity as fully and as perfectly as a worldly man or woman. For if thou mayest have as much charity of the gift of God as he or she hath that dwelleth

* Dan. xii 13.

still in worldly business, thou shalt have as much of the sovereign meed as he shall. And thou shalt over that, for that state which thou hast taken, have a singular meed and a worship which he shall not have. If thou wilt do well, therefore, meek thyself and forget thy state as it were right naught, for it is sooth, by itself it is right naught; and let thy desire and thy business be to destroy sins and to get charity and meekness and other ghostly virtues, for therein lieth all.

CHAPTER LXIII

HOW A MAN SHALL KNOW HOW MUCH PRIDE IS IN HIM

I HAVE nigh forgotten this image; but now I turn again thereto. If thou wilt wit how much pride is therein, thou mayest yet assay thyself thus. Look now wisely and flatter not thyself, if loving, praising, worshipping or fleshly favour of worldly men or of other be liking to thine heart and turn it into vain gladness and well paying* of thyself, thinking stilly in thine heart that men should praise thy life, or regard thy speech more than that of others; and also on contrary wise if it be so that men reprove thee and set thee at naught, holding thee but a fool or an hypo-

* Well paying—*i.e.*, satisfaction.

crite, or if they slander thee or speak evil of thee falsely, or in any other way dis-ease thee unskilfully, and for this thou feelest in thine heart a grievous heaviness against them and a great rising in thine heart with withstanding to suffer any shame or villainy in the sight of the world; if it be so with thee, it is a token that there is much pride in this dark image, seem thou never so holy in the sight of men. For though these stirrings be naught but little and venial, nevertheless they show well that there is much pride hid in the ground of thine heart, as the fox lurketh in his den. These stirrings with many more spring out of this image, so much that thou mayest scarcely do any good deed but it shall be mingled with some pride or vain delight in thyself, and so with thy pride thou defoulest all thy good deeds and makest them loathsome in the sight of thy Lord. I say not that they are lost because they are mingled with this pride, but I say that they are not so pleasant to thy Lord as they should be if they were simple and truly rooted in the virtue of meekness. And therefore, if thou wilt have cleanness of heart to come to the love of God, it behoveth thee not only to flee the rest of thine heart in vainglory by wilful assenting to pride, and also the reckless liking therein of thy frailty if it be against thy will, but also thou shalt flee the feeling

of pride and shalt eschew it as much as thou mayest. But that thou mayest not do, unless thou be full quick and ready about the keeping of thine heart, as I shall tell thee after.

CHAPTER LXIV

OF ENVY AND OF IRE AND OF THEIR BRANCHES; AND HOW, INSTEAD OF SIN, MAN'S PERSON IS OFTEN HATED

TURN this image upside down and look well therein, and thou shalt find two members of envy and ire fastened thereto, with many divers branches springing out of them, the which do let the love and charity which thou shouldest have to thy even-Christians. The branches of ire and envy are these: hatred, evil suspicion, false and unskilful deeming, melancholy rising of heart against them, despising and unkindness, backbiting and mis-saying, unskilful blaming, misliking and heaviness against them that despise thee or speak any evil of thee or against thee, a gladness of their dis-ease, a felness* against sinful men and others that will not do as thou thinkest they should do, with great desire of thine heart (under colour of charity and righteousness) that they were well punished and chastised for their sin. This

* Felness—*i.e.*, fury.

stirring seemeth good, nevertheless, if thou ransack it well, thou shalt find it sometimes more fleshly against the person than ghostly against the sin. Thou shalt love the man, be he never so sinful, and thou shalt hate the sin in each man whatsoever he be. Many are beguiled in this, for they set the bitter instead of the sweet, and take darkness instead of light, against the prophet's saying: *Woe be to them that say good is evil and evil is good, and set light as darkness, and bitter instead of sweet.** Thus do all those that, when they should hate the sin of their even-Christian and love the person, hate the person instead of the sin, and ween that they hate the sin. Wherefore it is a craft by itself, whoso could do it well.

CHAPTER LXV

THAT IT IS MASTERY TO LOVE MEN'S PERSONS AND WISELY HATE THEIR SINS

It is no mastery to wake and fast till thine head ache, nor to run to Rome and to Jerusalem upon thy bare feet, nor to start about and preach as if thou wouldst turn all men by thy preaching; nor is it any mastery to make churches or chapels, to feed poor men and make hospitals. But it is a great mastery

* Isa. v 20.

for a man to love his even-Christian in charity, and wisely to hate the sin of him and love the man. For though it be so that all these deeds beforesaid are good in themselves, nevertheless they are common to good men and to bad, for each man might do them if he would and had whereof: and for thee to do what each man may do, I hold it no mastery. But to love his even-Christian in charity and hate his sin, no man may do but good men only, which have it of the gift of God and not of their travail, as Saint Paul saith: *Love and charity is shed and spread in your hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to you,** and, therefore, it is the more precious and the more dainty† to come by. All other good deeds without this make not a man good nor worthy the bliss of heaven, but this alone and only this maketh a man good and all his good deeds meedful. All other gifts of God and works of man are common to good and to bad, to chosen and to reproved,‡ but this gift of charity is only of good and of chosen souls.

* Rom. v 5. † Dainty—*i.e.*, difficult.
‡ Reproved—*i.e.*, reprobate.

CHAPTER LXVI

THAT FOR THE SAME DEEDS DIVERS MEN SHALL HAVE DIVERS MEEDS

A GOOD man for the love of God fasteth, waketh, goeth on pilgrimage, and forsaketh all the likings of the world soothfastly in his heart without feigning. He shall have his meed in the bliss of heaven. And an hypocrite for vainglory of himself doth the same deeds and receiveth his meed here. Also a very preacher of God's word, fulfilled of charity and of meekness, sent of God and of Holy Church received, if he preach and teach God's word, he shall have a special meed of God, that is the aureole, for his preaching. An hypocrite or an heretic that have no meekness nor charity, nor are sent of God nor yet of Holy Church, if they preach they have their meed here. Also a good man in worldly state, who for love of God maketh many churches, chapels, abbeys, hospitals, and doth many other good deeds of mercy, he shall have his meed in the bliss of heaven; not for the deed in itself, but for the goodwill and the charity that he hath of the gift of God to do these good deeds. Another man, for vanity of himself and worship and pleasing of the world and for his own name, doth the same good deeds and hath his meed here.

The cause is, in all these, that the one hath charity and the other none. Which is the one and which is the other, our Lord knoweth and none but He.

CHAPTER LXVII

THAT ALL MEN'S GOOD DEEDS SHALL BE APPROVED THAT HAVE THE LIKENESS OF GOOD, SAVE THE OPEN HERETIC AND THE CURSED MAN

And therefore we should love and worship all men in our hearts, and approve, examine, and receive all their deeds that have the likeness of goodness, though the doers in God's sight are bad, save of the open heretic and of the open cursed man. Of these two specially shall we flee and eschew the presence and the communing with them, and then we shall reprove and refuse their deeds, seem they never so good, as long as they are rebels to God and Holy Church. As if a worldly cursed man make a church or feed poor men, thou mayest surely hold it naught and deem it as it is. Also if an open heretic which is rebel to Holy Church preach and teach, though he convert a hundred thousand souls, hold the deed as to himself right naught. For these men are openly out of charity, without which all is naught that a man doth.

CHAPTER LXVIII

THAT NO GOOD DEED MAY MAKE MEN SAFE WITHOUT CHARITY, AND THAT THEY ONLY THAT ARE MEEK FEEL CHARITY

And, therefore, it is a great mastery for a man to cun* to love his even-Christian in charity. All this saying may be openly proved by Saint Paul's words thus, in praising of charity: *If I speak the language of all men and of angels also, if I have no charity I am right naught. And if I have so great faith that I may turn hills and bear them away, and I have no charity, I am right naught. And also though I had all manner of knowing of all privities without charity, I am right naught. And if I give all that I have to poor men and my body to the fire to be burnt, and I have no charity, it profiteth me right naught.*† Here it seemeth by Saint Paul's words that a man may do all good deeds bodily without charity, and that charity is naught else but to love God and his even-Christian as himself. How should then any wretched caitiff living in earth, what that he be, have delight or trust or security in himself for aught that he can or may do with all his bodily mights or his kindly reason, since all this is naught worth

* Cun—*i.e.*, know, ken, can.
† 1 Cor. xiii 1-3.

without love and charity to his even-Christian? And this charity may not be gotten with working of himself, for it is a free gift of God sent into a meek soul, as Saint Paul saith. Who then dare hardily say, "I have charity," or "I am in charity"? Soothly no man may say it surely but he that is perfectly and soothfastly meek. Other men may trow of themselves and hope that they may be in charity by tokens; but he that is perfectly meek feeleth it, and therefore might he soothly say it. Thus meek was Saint Paul, and for this said he thus of himself: *Who shall depart me from the charity of God? Tribulation or anguish?* And he answereth himself and saith: *There shall no creature put me from the charity of God which I have in Christ Jesus.** Many men do deeds of charity and have no charity as I have said. For to reprove a sinner for his sin to his amending and in convenable time, it is a deed of charity, but to hate the sinner instead of the sin, it is against charity. He that is verily meek can depart the one from the other, and no man but he. For though a man had all moral virtues of all philosophers he could not do this. He should be able to hate the sin in all other men, for he hateth it in himself, but he could not love the man in charity for all his philosophy. Also if a

* Rom. viii 35.

man had knowing of all clergy and of divinity and be not soothfastly meek, he shall lightly err and stumble and take the one for the other. But meekness is worthy to receive a gift of God the which may not be learned by cunning of man; and, therefore, he that is meek can hate the sin and truly love the man. But now peradventure thou beginnest to dread for that I have said that charity may not be gotten by any work that thou mayest do. How shalt thou then do? As unto this I say that there is nothing so hard to get as charity and this is sooth, as within our travail; and on the contrary wise I say that there is no gift of God that may so lightly be had as charity, for our Lord giveth no gift so freely nor so gladly nor so commonly as He doth charity. How shalt thou then have it, sayest thou? Be meek and low in spirit and thou shalt have it; and what is lighter for thee to do than to be meek? Soothly nothing. Then seemeth it that there is nothing that so lightly may be had as charity, and, therefore, thou needest not be much adread. Be meek and have it. Thus saith Saint James the apostle: *Our Lord withstandeth proud men, but to meek men He giveth grace*,* which grace is properly His charity, for after the measure of thy meekness so shalt thou have charity. If thou have

* Jas. iv 16.

meekness imperfectly, in will only not in affection, then shalt thou have imperfect charity. This is good, for it sufficeth to salvation, as David saith: *Lord, with Thine eyes of mercy Thou seest mine imperfection.** But if thou have meekness perfectly, then shalt thou have perfect charity, and that is best. The other it behoveth that we needs must have if we will be saved, and this should we desire. Then if thou ask me who is perfectly meek, thou shalt no more have of me at this time but this. He is meek that soothfastly knoweth himself as he is.

CHAPTER LXIX

HOW A MAN SHALL WIT HOW MUCH WRATH AND ENVY IS HID IN THE GROUND OF HIS HEART

Now turn yet again to this image if thou wilt assay how much ire and envy is hid in thine heart that thou feelest not. Look well and behold thyself wisely, when such stirrings of ire and envy against thine even-Christian spring out of thine heart. The more stirred that thou art by melancholy, bitter, or wicked will against him, the more is this image in thee; for the more thou murmurest by impatience either against God

* Ps. cxxxviii 16.

for any tribulation or sickness or other bodily dis-ease sent of God, or against thine even-Christian for aught that he doth against thee, the less is the image of Jesus reformed in thee. I say not that such murmurings of fleshly angriness are deadly sins; but I say that they let cleanness of heart and peace of conscience, that thou mayest not have full charity, by which thou shouldest come to life contemplative. For that end is the purpose of all my saying, that thou shouldst not only cleanse thine heart from deadly sins, but also from venial, as much as thou mightest, and that the ground of sin might by grace of Jesus Christ somewhat be slackened in thee.

CHAPTER LXX

BY WHAT TOKENS THOU SHALT KNOW IF THOU LOVEST THINE ENEMY, AND WHAT ENSAMPLES THOU SHALT TAKE OF CHRIST TO LOVE HIM

For though it be so that thou feelest no evil against thine even-Christian for a time, yet art thou not sure that the ground of ire is quenched in thee, nor yet art thou lord of the virtue of charity. For suffer him to touch thee a little by an angry or a shrewd word, and thou shalt feel anon if thine heart be yet

made whole by fulness of charity. The more thou art stirred and evil willed against the person, the further art thou from charity. And if thou be naught stirred against the person, neither by angry cheer* outward nor by privy hate in thine heart, to despise and deem him or set him at naught, but the more shame and villainy he doth to thee in word or in deed, the more pity and compassion thou hast of him, as thou wouldest have of a man that were out of his mind, and thou canst not find in thine heart to hate him—for love is so good in itself—but pray for him and help him and desire his amending, not only with the mouth as hypocrites can do, but with affection of love in thine heart, then hast thou perfect charity to thine even-Christian. This charity had Saint Stephen perfectly when he prayed for them that stoned him to death. This charity counselled Christ to those that would be His perfect followers when He said thus: *Love your enemies and do good to them that hate you, pray for those that pursue you.*† And therefore if thou wilt follow Christ be like to Him in this craft. Learn to love thine enemies and sinful men, for all these are thine even-Christians. Look and bethink thee how Christ loved Judas, which was both His deadly enemy and a sinful

* Cheer—*i.e.*, mien. † Matt. v 44.

caitiff: how goodly Christ was to him, how benign, how courteous and how lowly to him that He knew to be damnable, and nevertheless He chose him for his apostle and sent him to preach with other apostles. He gave him power to work miracles, He showed him the same good cheer in word and deed as He did to other apostles, He washed his feet and fed him with His precious body, and preached to him as He did to the other apostles, He rebuked him not openly—for it was privy—nor mis-said him, nor despised him, nor spoke any evil of him, though if He had done all these, He had said but sooth. And, moreover, when Judas took him, He kissed him and called him His friend. All this charity showed Christ unto Judas the which He knew for damnable; in no manner feigning or flattering but in the soothfastness of good love and clean charity. For though it were sooth that Judas was not worthy to have had any gift of God or any sign of love for his wickedness, nevertheless it was worthy and skilful that our Lord should show Himself as He is. He is love and goodness to all His creatures, as He was to Judas. I say not that He loved him for his sin, nor loved him for His chosen, as He loved Saint Peter: but He loved him, inasmuch as He was His creature, and showed him tokens of love if he would have been amended

thereby. Follow after somewhat if thou mayest, for though thou be enclosed in an house as regards thy body, nevertheless in thine heart, where the stead* of love is, thou shouldest be able to have such love to thine even-Christian as I speak of. Whoso weeneth himself to be a perfect lover and follower of Christ's teaching in his living—as some may ween that he is, inasmuch as he preacheth and teacheth, and is poor of worldly goods as Christ was—but cannot follow Christ in this love and charity to love his even-Christians, each man good and bad, friends and foes, without feigning, flattering, despising in his heart against the man, angriness and malicious reproving—soothly he beguileth himself. The nearer that he weeneth to be the further he is, for Christ said to them that would be His disciples thus: *This is My bidding, that ye should love together as I have loved you. For if ye love as I have loved, then are ye My disciples.*† But now sayest thou: how shalt any love him that is bad as well as him that is good? As unto this I say thus: that thou shall love both good and bad in charity, but not for the same cause; as I shall tell thee now. Thou shalt love thy even-Christian as thyself. Now thou shalt love thyself only in God or else

* Stead—*i.e.*, dwelling-place.

† John xiii 34.

for God. In God thou lovest thyself when thou art rightful by grace and virtues, and lovest not thyself except only for that righteousness and virtues that God giveth thee. Then lovest thou thyself in God, for thou lovest not thyself but God; also for God thou lovest thyself, and if thou wert in deadly sin and wouldest be made rightful and virtuous, then lovest thou thyself not as thou art, for thou art unrightful, but as thou wouldst be. Right so shalt thou love thine even-Christians. If they be good and rightful, thou shalt love them by charity in God, only because they be good and rightful; for then lovest thou God in them, as goodness and righteousness, more than if they be bad in deadly sin, as thine enemies that hate thee, or others of whom thou hast full evidence that they be not in grace. Yet shalt thou love them; not as they are, nor as good men and rightful, for they are bad and unrightful, but thou shalt love them for God, that they might be good and rightful. And so shalt thou nothing hate in them, but that thing that is contrary to righteousness, and that is sin. This is, as I understand, the teaching of Saint Austin, to separate the love of the man from the hate of his sin, for the love of thine even-Christians. He that is meek, or would soothfastly be meek, can love his even-Christian, and none but he.

CHAPTER LXXI

HOW A MAN SHALL KNOW HOW MUCH COVETOUSNESS IS HID IN HIS HEART

LIFT up well this image and look well about, and thou shalt be able to see covetousness and love of earthly things occupy a great part of this image, though it seem little. Thou hast forsaken riches and much savour of this world, and art shut up as in a dungeon, but hast thou forsaken cleanly the love of all this? I trow not yet. It is less mastery to forsake worldly good than to forsake the love of it. Peradventure thou hast not forsaken thy covetousness, but thou hast changed it from great things into small, as from a pound into a penny, and from a silver piece into the disc of a halfpenny. This is a small change; thou art no good merchant. These examples are childish, nevertheless they betoken more. If thou believe me not, assay thyself. If thou have love and delight in the having and holding of anything that thou hast, such as it is, with which love thou feedest thine heart for a time; or if thou have desire and yearning to have something that thou hast not, with which desire thine heart is travailed and troubled with unskilful business, so that the clean desire of virtue and of God may not rest therein, this is a

token that there yet is covetousness in this image. And if thou wilt assay better, look if anything that thou hast be taken away from thee, by mastery, or by borrowing, or by any other wise, so that thou mayest not get it again, and for this thou art dis-eased, angered and troubled in thine heart, both because thou wantest that thing that thou wouldest have and mayest not have it, and also thou art stirred against him that hath it, to strive and chide with him because he might restore it again and will not, that is a token that thou lovest worldly goods. For thus do worldly men. When their goods and their riches are taken from them, they are heavy, sorrowful, angry and chiding, and stirring against them that have it, openly by word and by deed; but thou dost all this in thine heart privily where God seeth, and yet thou art in more default than a worldly man. For you have forsaken in likeness the love of worldly things, but a worldly man hath not, and therefore he is excused though he strive and pursue for his goods by lawful ways, to have them again. But now sayest thou that it behoveth thee to have thy necessaries of such things as belong to thee, as well as a worldly man. I grant thee well thereto, but thou shouldest not love it for itself, nor have liking in the holding nor in the keeping, nor feel sorrow or heaviness in the losing or

in the withdrawing of it, for, as Saint Gregory saith, as much sorrow as thou hast in the losing of a thing, so much love hadst thou in the keeping. And therefore, if thine heart were made whole and thou hadst soothfastly felt desire of ghostly things, and had there withall a sight of the least ghostly thing that is, thou shouldest set at naught all the love and the liking of any earthly thing, and it should not cleave upon thee. For to love and to have more than thou needest skilfully, but only for lust and liking, it is a great default. Also to set thy love upon anything that thou needest, for itself, is a default, but not so great. But to have and use that thing that thou needest, without love of it more than kind or need asketh—without which the thing may not be used—it is no default. Soothly in this point, as I trow, many that have the state and the likeness of poverty are much letted and hindered from the love of God. I accuse no man, and reprove not any state, for in each estate some are good and some are other. But one thing I say to every man or woman that hath taken the state of wilful poverty, whether he be religious or secular, or what degree he be in: as long as his affection is bound and fastened, and, as it were, glued with love of any earthly thing that he hath or would have, he may not have nor feel soothfastly the clean love

and the clear sight of ghostly things. For Saint Austin saith to our Lord thus: Lord, he loveth Thee but little, that loveth anything with Thee that he loveth not for Thee. For the more love and covetousness of any earthly thing there is with thee, the less is the love of God in thy heart. For though it be so that this love of earthly things putteth not men out of charity—unless it be so much that it strangle the love of God and of their even-Christian—soothly it hindereth them and letteth them from the fervour of charity, and also from that special meed which they should have in the bliss of heaven for perfect poverty; and that is a great loss if they might see it. For whoso might know ghostly meed, how good, how precious, and how worthy it is—for it is everlasting—he would not for the love of all earthly joy or for savour of any earthly thing, though he might have it without sin, let or lessen the least meed of the bliss of heaven which he might have if he would. I speak further than I do, but I pray thee do thus as I say by the grace of God, if thou mayest, or any other man whoso will; for that were a comfort to mine heart, that, if I may not have it in myself as I say, I might have it in thee, or in any other creature which hath received more plenty of His grace than I. But see now then, since covetousness in the naked ground letteth a

man or woman so much from the ghostly feeling of the love of God, how much more then it letteth and cumbereth worldly men and women which, by all their wits and bodily business night and day, study and travail how they may get riches and plenty of worldly good. They can have no delight but in worldly things, nor will they, for they see it not. I say no more of them at this time, for in this writing I speak not to them; but this I say, if they might see and would see what they do, they would not do so.

CHAPTER LXXII

HOW A MAN SHALL KNOW WHEN HE SINNETH NOT IN EATING AND DRINKING, AND WHEN HE SINNETH VENIALLY, AND WHEN DEADLY

YET mayest thou see more in this image though it be dark; and that is fleshly love to thyself, in gluttony, accidie, and lechery. These fleshly likings make a man full beastly and far from the inward savour of the love of God, and from the clear sight of ghostly things. But now sayest thou, since it behoveth thee of necessity to eat and drink and sleep, and that mayest thou not do without liking, therefore thou thinkest that this liking is no sin. Unto this I say that if in

eating and drinking and other needful things thou keep to the bodily measure of thy need, and receivest no more liking than nature asketh, and dost all this for ghostly delight which thou feelest in thy soul, I grant thee forsooth that thou then sinnest right naught therein, for then canst thou eat and sleep well. Soothly and without doubt I am full far from that knowing and further from the working; for to eat I have by nature, but to ken how I should eat I may not but by the grace of God. Saint Paul had by grace this cunning as he saith himself thus: *I am informed and kenned in all things, for I can hunger and I can eat, I can with plenty and I can with poverty. I may do all in Him that strengtheneth me.** Saint Austin said to our Lord thus: Lord, thou hast teached me that I should take meat as a medicine. Hunger is a sickness of nature and meat is a medicine thereto, therefore the liking that cometh withal, inasmuch as it is natural and needful, it is no sin, but when it passeth into lust and into wilful liking, then it is sin. And therefore there lieth all the mastery to have cunning to dispart wisely thy need from lust and wilful liking. They are so knit together, and the one cometh with the other, so that it is hard to receive that one as thou needest and reprove that other as wilful lust, the

* Phil. IV 12, 13.

which often cometh under colour of need. Nevertheless since it is so that need is the ground of this, and that need is no sin—for be a man never so holy it behoveth him to eat and drink and sleep—therefore the lust and the liking that cometh under colour of this need and surpasseth this need is the less sin. For commonly a man sinneth not deadly in gluttony unless he be encumbered with other deadly sins before done; then may he the lightlier sin deadly in this. For it is sooth he that chooseth lust and liking of his flesh, and delighteth in welfare of meat or drink as full rest of his heart—so that he would never have other joy nor other bliss but live ever in such lust of his flesh if he might—it is no doubt that he sinneth deadly, for he loveth his flesh more than God. But he that liveth in deadly sin of pride, of envy, or such other, he is so blinded by the devil that for the time he hath no power of his free will; and therefore he may not well withstand fleshly likings when they come, but falleth down wilfully to them, as a beast doth to carrion. And inasmuch as he hath no general will before to God (principally because he is in deadly sin), therefore the lust of gluttony, the which he falleth into lightly, is to him deadly sin, for he maketh no withstanding general nor special. But another man or woman which is in grace or charity

and hath always a good general will to God in his soul, whether he sleep or wake, eat or drink, or what good deed soever he doth (so that it be not evil in itself), by that will and desire he chooseth God above all things, and hath liefer forbear all things of the world than offend his God, because of his love of Him. This will, though it be but general, is of so great virtue by the grace of our Lord Jesus, that if such a one fall by frailty in lust, or in liking of meat and of drink, or of such other sickness, either by excess of eating too much, or too often, or too greedily, too lustily or too delicately, too soon or in time unseasonable, it saveth him and keepeth him from deadly sin. And this is sooth, as long as he is in charity by other deeds, and keepeth his general will to all that he doth, and namely if he know how to admonish his own wretchedness and cry after mercy, and be in purpose specially to withstand such fleshly lusts. For our Lord is good and merciful, and these venial sins of gluttony He forgiveth right soon unto a meek soul; for the stirring and the liking of gluttony—inasmuch as they are hardest to flee because of the need of our bodily nature—among all other sins are most excusable and least perilous. And therefore thou shalt not rise against the ground of this sin as thou shalt against all other sins, for the ground of this sin is only need, which

may not be escaped, unless thou wilt do worse and slay the need as many fools do which should slay the thief and spare the true man. That is to say they should slay the unskilful lust and the wilful liking, and spare and keep the bodily nature, but they do not so. But against all other sins thou shalt arise to destroy; not only deadly sins and the great venials, but also the ground of them as much as thou mayest. See by this skill, thou mayest not live without meat and drink, but thou mayest live without lechery if thou wilt, and be ever the better therefor. And therefore thou shalt not only flee the deed of it, which is a deadly sin, but also wilful liking of it in thine heart without deed, which is venial sin (and sometimes it is deadly), but also thou shalt travail against the ground of it to destroy the feeling and the rising of fleshly stirring.

CHAPTER LXXIII

HOW THE GROUND OF LECHERY SHOULD BE DESTROYED WITH GHOSTLY TRAVAIL AND NOT WITH BODILY

But this travail against the ground of lechery shall be ghostly, as by prayers and ghostly virtues, and not by bodily penance. For wit thou well that if thou fast and wake and scourge thyself, and do all that thou canst,

thou shalt never have cleanness and chastity without the gift of God and the grace of meekness. Thou shouldest sooner slay thyself than thou shouldest slay fleshly stirrings and feelings of lust and lechery, either in thine heart or in thy flesh, by any bodily penance. But by the grace of Jesus in a meek soul the ground may be much stopped and destroyed, and the spring may be much dried, and that is very chastity in body and in soul. On the same manner may be said of pride and of covetousness and of such other, for thou mightest live if thou wert not proud nor covetous; and therefore shalt thou destroy all the feelings of them as much as thou mayest. But in gluttony thou shalt rise and smite away the unskilful stirrings and save the ground whole.

CHAPTER LXXIV

THAT A MAN SHOULD BE BUSY TO PUT AWAY ALL STIRRINGS OF SIN; BUT MORE BUSY OF GHOSTLY SINS THAN OF BODILY

And therefore he that riseth against the feeling of fleshly liking in meat and drink, more fully and more sharply than of pride or covetousness, which because they seem fair are not lightly reproved, or of envy or of lechery, I say that he is half blind, for he

seeth not yet ghostly uncleanness, as of pride and envy, how foul it is in God's sight. I hope if a man might see with his eye ghostly how foul pride and covetousness are in the sight of God, and how contrary to Him, he should more loathe a stirring of pride and the vain liking of it, and also he should the more dread and arise against an evil will of envy or ire to his even-Christians than many a stirring or liking either of gluttony or of lechery. Nevertheless, all men ween not so. For commonly men are more afraid to feel a stirring of fleshly sin, and have for it more sorrow and heaviness, than for the great liking in vainglory or in other ghostly sins. But they are not wise, for if they will understand Holy Writ and doctors' saws thereof, they should find as I say, which I neither may nor will rehearse now.

I will not excuse them that fall in likings of gluttony and lechery that they sin not, for I wot well that all the species of them are sin more or less, after the measure of the lust of the sin and other likings with wilful circumstances. But I would that thou knewest and chargest all, ilk a sin as it is, more the more as are ghostly sins, less the less as are fleshly sins. And yet shalt thou nevertheless hate and flee all, both bodily and ghostly, upon thy might; for wit thou well that fleshly desires and unskilful likings in meat and

drink, or any likings that belong to the body, passing reasonable need, though they be not always great sins to him that is in charity, nevertheless to a soul that desireth cleanness and ghostly feeling of God, they are full heavy, painful and bitter, and much to eschew. For the spirit may not feel his kindly savour within till the flesh have lost his beastly savour without.

CHAPTER LXXV

THAT HUNGER AND OTHER BODILY PAINS MUCH LET GHOSTLY WORKING

AND therefore if thou wilt come to cleanness of heart, it behoveth thee to withstand unskilful stirring of fleshly delights. But against the ground thou shalt not rise, as I have said before: for the ground of it is need, as natural hunger which thou shalt needs feel and tend thereto in time, and help thyself against it by medicine of meat, as thou wouldest keep thyself reasonably against a bodily sickness, that thou mightest more freely serve God both bodily and ghostly. For wit thou well what man or woman that shall be occupied ghostly in thoughts, unskilful pain or hunger wilfully taken, or bodily sickness in the stomach or in the head, or in other part of the body for the default

of good ruling of himself, by too much fasting or by any other wise, such a one shall much let the spirit, and much hinder him from the knowing and the beholding of ghostly things, unless he have the more grace. For though it be so that the bodily pain, either of penance or of sickness, or else bodily occupation, sometimes letteth not the fervour of love to God in devotion, but often increaseth it; nevertheless, I hold that it letteth the fervour of love in contemplation, the which may not be had nor felt but in rest of body and soul.

CHAPTER LXXVI

WHAT REMEDY A MAN SHALL USE AGAINST DEFAULT MADE IN EATING OR DRINKING

For this do thou skilfully that belongeth to thee, and keep thy bodily kind upon reason, and suffer God then to send what He will, health or sickness; take it gladly and murmur not against God wilfully. Do thou as I say, take thy meat as it cometh, and ordain for it if need be upon reason, and take it gladly as for need. But be well ware of lust that cometh with need; eschew too much as well as too little. And so when thou hast done, and then the biting of conscience cometh to thy mind that thou hast eaten too much,

and so then beginnest to tarry thee and draw to overmuch bitterness, lift up the desire of thy heart to thy good Lord Jesus, and know thyself for a wretch and a beast, and ask of Him forgiveness, and say that thou wilt amend it, and trust of forgiveness. Leave off then and tarry no longer withal, nor strive not much as thou wouldest destroy it utterly, for it is not worth to do so. Thou shalt never so bring it about, but readily ordain thee to some other occupation bodily or ghostly, after thou feelest thee disposed, that thou mightest more profit in other virtues, as meekness and charity. For wit thou well he that in his desire and in his travail hath regard to none other thing but to meekness and charity, aye crying after them how he might have them, he shall in that desire with working following after, profit and wax in all other virtues, as in chastity, abstinence, and such other, though he have but little regard to them, more in a year, than he should without this desire profit in seven, if he strive with gluttony, lechery, and such other continually, and beat himself with scourges each day from morn to evensong time.

CHAPTER LXXVII

THAT THROUGH BUSY DESIRE AND TRAVAIL FOR MEEKNESS AND CHARITY, A MAN COMETH SOONER TO OTHER VIRTUES THAN BY TRAVAIL IN HIMSELF

GET to thee then meekness and charity, and if thou wilt travail and swink busily to have them, you shall have enough to do in getting of them. And if you may get them they shall rule thee and measure thee full privily how thou shalt eat and how thou shalt drink and succour all thy bodily need, that there shall no man wit it unless thou wilt: and thou shall not be in perplexity nor in ire nor in angriness and heaviness, nor in lusts nor in likings, but in peace of glad conscience with a sad restfulness. I speak further than I thought to have spoken in this matter, but nevertheless if you may do as I tell thee, and I hope God shall make all well. By this that I have said may you somewhat see in this image of sin how much it letteth thee. The gospel saith how Abraham spake to the rich man that was buried in hell on this wise: *There is a great chaos*, that is to say a thick darkness *between us and thee, that we may not come to thee nor thou to us.** This dark image in thy soul and mine also may be

* Luke xvi 26.

called a great chaos, that is a great darkness, for it letteth us that we cannot come to Abraham which is Jesus, and it letteth Him that He will not come to us.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

OF THE DARKNESS OF THE IMAGE OF SIN, AND WHAT COMETH IN BY THE WINDOWS THEREOF

Lift up thy lantern and see in this image five windows by the which sin cometh into thy soul, as the prophet saith: *Death cometh in by our windows.** These windows are the five wits by which thy soul goeth out from himself, and seeketh his delight and his feeding in earthly things against his own kind; as by the eye to see curious and fair things, and so of other wits. By the unskilful using of these wits unto vanity wilfully, thy soul is much letted from the ghostly wits within; and therefore it behoveth thee to stop these windows or bar them, and only when need asketh to open them.

* Jer. ix 21.

CHAPTER LXXIX

THAT THE SOUL FOR DEFAULT OF KNOWING OF ITSELF GOETH OUT BY FIVE WINDOWS TO SEEK OUTWARD LIKING

AND that were little mastery to thee if thou mightest once see thy soul by clear understanding, what it is and how fair it is in its own kind, were it not that it is so overlaid with a black mantle of this foul image; but, because thou knowest it not, therefore thou leavest the inly sight of thyself and seekest thy meat forth without, as a beast unreasonable. Thus saith our Lord menacing to a chosen soul in Holy Writ: *Thou fair among women if thou know not thyself, go out and walk after the steps of the flock of thy fellows, and feed thy goats.** And it is thus much for to say: Thou soul fair by kind, made to the likeness of God, frail as a woman in thy body for the first sin, because thou knowest not thyself, that angels' food should be thy delights within, therefore thou goest out by the bodily wits and seekest thy meat and thy liking as a beast of the flock—that is as one reproved—and therefore thou feedest thy thoughts and thine affections, which are unclean as goats. It is a shame to thee to do so.

* Cant. i 7.

CHAPTER LXXX

THAT A SOUL SHOULD NOT BEG WITHOUT FORTH, BUT WITHIN OF JESUS WHAT IT NEEDETH

And therefore turn home again in thyself and hold thee within, and beg no more without, namely swines' meat. For if thou wilt always be a beggar, ask and crave within of thy Lord Jesus, for He is rich enough, and gladlier will He give unto thee than thou wilt ask. And run no more out as a beast of the flock, that is a worldly man or woman that hath no more delight but in his bodily wits. And if thou do thus, thy Lord Jesus will give thee all that thou needest. For He may lead thee into His wine cellar and make thee assay of His wines, which liketh thee best, for He hath many tuns. Thus a chosen soul, joying in Holy Writ, saith of our Lord: *A king led me into a wine cellar.** And that is to say: inasmuch as I forsook the drunkenness of fleshly lusts and worldly likings, which are bitter as wormwood, for this the king of bliss, Lord Jesus, led me in; that is to say, first into myself to behold and know myself, and after He led me into His cellar, that is to say, above myself by overpassing only into Him, and gave me assay of His wine, that is,

* Cant. ii 4.

to taste of ghostly sweetness and heavenly joy. These are not the words of me a wretched caitiff living in sin, but they are words of the spouse of our Lord in Holy Writ; and these words I say to thee that thou mightest draw thy soul from without and follow after as thou mayest.

CHAPTER LXXXI

THAT THE HOLE OF THE IMAGINATION NEEDETH TO BE STOPPED, AS WELL AS THE WINDOWS OF THE WITS

But now sayest thou that thou dost so. Thou seest no worldly things nor hearest them, nor hast thou use of thy bodily wits more than need asketh, and for this thou art enclosed. As to this I say, if thou do thus, as I hope thou dost, thou hast stopped a great window of this image, but yet art thou not secure, for thou hast not stopped the privy holes of imagining in thine heart. For albeit thou see me not with thy bodily eye, thou mayest see me with thy soul by imagination, and so mayest thou do of all bodily things. If thy soul be fed wilfully by imaginations of vanities of the world, and desiring of worldly things for a wilful comfort and ease, soothly although thy soul be within as for the bodily wits, it is nevertheless

full far without by such vain imagination. But now askest thou whether it be any great sin for a soul to occupy him in such vanities either in wits or in imagining. As unto this I say I would that thou shouldst ask no man this question. For he that will soothfastly love God, he asketh not commonly whether this or that is the greater sin. For he shall think that anything which letteth him from the love of God is great sin, and he shalt think nothing sin but that thing which is not good and letteth him from the love of God. What is sin but a wanting or a forbearing of good? I say not that it shall be painful to him as a deadly sin, or a venial should be, nor say I not but that he knoweth deadly from venial and more fleeth it.

CHAPTER LXXXII

WHEN THE USE OF THE WITS IS DEADLY SIN, AND WHEN VENIAL

NEVERTHELESS, some deal shall I say to thy question, for thy desire draweth more out of mine heart than I thought to have said in the beginning. Our Lord saith in the Gospel thus: *A man made a great supper and called many thereto, and sent his servant at supper time after them that were prayed. The first excused him and said on this wise, that he*

*might not come, for he had bought a town; the other excused him that he might not come, for he had bought five yokes of oxen and went to assay them; the third for that he had wedded a wife.** I leave to speak of the first and the last, and I tell thee of the middest, of him that bought the oxen, for he is to this purpose. Five yokes of oxen betoken the five wits which are beastly as an ox. Now this man that was called to the supper was not reproved for that he bought these oxen but because he went to assay them, and so would not come. Right so I say to thee. For to have thy wits and use them in need, it is no sin; but if thou go wilfully to assay them by vain delight in creatures, then it is sin. For if thou choose that delight as a final rest of thy soul, and as a full liking, that thou keepest none other bliss to have but such manner of worldly vanity, then it is deadly, for thou choosest it as thy God, and so shalt thou be put out from the supper. For Saint Paul forbade us that we should assay our wits so, when he said thus: *Thou shalt not go after thy lust*,† not wilfully assay thy likings. A man or a woman that is encumbered with deadly sins shall not well escape deadly sin in this, though he see it not. Nevertheless if thou, by frailty, delight thee in thy wits and such vanity, but in that

* Luke xiv 16-20. † Rom. xiii 14.

thou keepest in charity in other sides, and thou choosest not this delight for a full rest of thy soul, but thou settest aye God before all things in thy desire, this sin is venial, after the circumstances, more or less; nor shalt thou for these venial sins be put from the supper in the bliss of heaven. But thou shalt want the tasting and the assaying of that delicate supper while yet living on earth, unless thou be busy with all thy might to withstand such venial sins. For though it be so that venial sins break not charity, soothly they let the fervour and the ghostly feeling of charity.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

HOW A GHOSTLY MAN OR WOMAN SHALL BEHAVE TO THEM THAT COME TO THEM

But now sayest thou that thou mayest not keep thee from hearing of vanities, for divers men, worldly and other, come often to speak with thee, and tell thee some tales of vanity. Unto this I say thus, that communing with thine even-Christian is not much against thee, but helpeth thee sometimes if thou work wisely. For thou mayest assay thereby the measure of thy charity to thine even-Christian, whether it be much or little. Thou art bound, as each man or woman is,

to love thine even-Christian, principally in thine heart, and also in deed, to show them tokens of charity as reason asketh, after thy might and after thy knowing. Now since it is so that thou oughtest not to go out of thine house to seek occasion how thou mayest profit thine even-Christian by deeds of mercy, because thou art enclosed, nevertheless thou art bound to love them all in thine heart, and to show them that come to thee tokens of love soothfastly. And, therefore, whoso will speak with thee, whosoever he be, or in what degree that he be, and thou knowest not what he is nor why he cometh, be soon ready with a good will to wit what his will is. Be not dangerous* nor suffer him not long to bide with thee, but look how ready and how glad thou wouldest be if an angel of heaven would come so and speak with thee: so ready and so buxom be thou in will to speak with thine even-Christian when he cometh to thee, for thou wottest not what he is, nor why he cometh, nor what need he hath of thee or thou of him, till thou hast assayed. And though thou be in prayer or in devotion, so that thou art loath to break off, because thou thinkest thou shouldest not leave God for no man's speech, methinketh not so in this case. For if thou be wise thou shalt not leave God, but thou

* Dangerous—*i.e.*, aloof.

shalt find Him and have Him and see Him in thine even-Christians as well as in prayer, but in another manner shalt thou have Him than in prayer. If thou canst well love thine even-Christian, it should not hinder thee to speak with him discreetly. Discretion shalt thou have on this manner as methinketh. Whoso cometh to thee, ask him meekly what he will. And if he come to tell his dis-ease and to be comforted of thy speech, hear him gladly, and suffer him to say what he will for ease of his own heart. And when he hath done, comfort him if thou canst gladly, goodly, and charitably, and soon break off. And then after that, if he will fall into idle tales or vanities of the world, or of other men's deeds, answer him but little nor feed not his speech, and he shall soon be weary and soon take his leave. If it be another man that cometh to teach thee, as a man of Holy Church, hear him lowly with reverence for his order. And if his speech comfort thee, ask of him and make thee not to teach him. It falleth not to thee to teach a priest, but in need. If his speech comfort thee not, answer little, and he will soon take his leave. If it be another man that cometh to give thee his alms, or else to hear thee speak, or to be taught of thee, speak goodly and meekly to them all. Reprove no man of his defaults; it falleth not to thee

unless he be the more homely with thee, that thou wottest well that he will take it of thee. And shortly to say as thou conceivest aught should profit thine even-Christian, namely ghostly, that mayest thou say if thou canst and he will take it. And of all other things keep silence as much as thou mayest, and thou shalt in short time have but little press that shall let thee. Thus methinketh; do better if thou canst.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

OF THE DARK IMAGE OF SIN, AND OF THE CLOTHING THEREOF

By this that I have said mayest thou see a little the darkness of this image of sin; not because I have described it fully to thee as it is, for I cannot. Nevertheless by this little thou mayest see more if thou look well. But now sayest thou: Whereby wottest thou that I bear such an image about with me as thou speakest of? As on this I can answer: I may take upon me a word said by the prophet, and it is this: *I have found a false image*, that men call a mawment,* *in myself*,† well foul, disfigured and forshapen with wretchedness of all those sins which I have spoken of, by the which I am cast

* Mawment—*i.e.*, idol. † Osee xii 8.

down in many fleshly likings and worldly vanities from cleanness of heart, and feeling of ghostly virtues more than I can or may say, and that me repenteth, and I cry God mercy. By this wretchedness that I feel in myself more than I have said, may I the better tell thee of thine image, for all we come of Adam and Eve, clothed with clothes of a beast's hide, in token that for his sin he was forshapen like to a beast; as Holy Writ saith: *Our Lord made to Adam and to his wife clothes of a beast's hide,** in token that for his sin he was forshapen like to a beast; with which beastly clothes we all are born, and unbelapped and disfigured from our kindly shape.

CHAPTER LXXXV

WHICH BE THE LIMBS OF THE IMAGE OF SIN

THEN is this an ugly image to look upon. The head is pride, for pride is the first and the principal sin, as the Wise Man saith: *The beginning of all* manner of *sin is pride.*† The back and the hind part of it is covetousness, as Saint Paul saith: *I shall forget all* worldly *things which are backward, and I shall stretch me forward*‡ to endless things. The breast,

* Gen. iii 21. † Ecclus. x 14.
‡ Phil. iii 13.

in the which is the heart, is envy, for it is no fleshly sin but it is a devil's sin, as the Wise Man saith: *By envy of the devil death cometh into all the world; for this all those that are of his party follow him therein.** The arms of it are wrath, inasmuch as a man wreaketh him of his wrath by his arms against Christ's bidding in the gospel. *If a man smite thee upon the one cheek* with his hand, then shalt thou not smite him again, but *offer him that other cheek.*† The body of this image is gluttony, as Saint Paul saith: *Meat serveth to the belly, and the belly serveth to get meat; but God shall destroy both belly and meat.*‡ That shall be the last end in the full reforming of his chosen, and in deeming of the reproved. The members of it are lechery, of the which Saint Paul saith thus: *Ye shall not give your members*, especially your privy members, *to be arms of sin.*§ The feet of this image are accidie: therefore the Wise Man saith to the slow, to stir him to good works: *Run quickly about* unto good works, and haste thee soon, for the time passeth; *and raise up thy friend*‖ which is Jesus, by devout prayer and meditation. Here hast thou heard the members of this image.

* Wisdom ii 25.
† Matt. v 39.
‡ 1 Cor. vi 13.
§ Rom. vi 13.
‖ Prov. vi 4.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

WHEREOF THE IMAGE OF JESUS IS MADE, AND HOW WE ARE PASSING FORTH IN THE IMAGE OF SIN

THIS is not the image of Jesus, but is liker an image of the devil. For the image of Jesus is made of virtues, with meekness, and perfect love, and charity. But this is of false fleshly love to thyself with all these members fastened thereto. This image bearest thou and every man, whatsoever he be, until by grace of Jesus it be some deal destroyed and broken down. Thus it seemeth that David saith in the psalter book, that though it be so that a man were made in the image of God, stable and steadfast, nevertheless *because of sin he forth passeth* living in this world in the image of sin, by the which *he is unstable and troubled in vain.** Also Saint Paul speaketh of this image thus: If we will come to the love of God, *as we have borne herebefore the image of the earthly man,* the first Adam that is the image of sin, right *so now let us bear the image of the heavenly*† *man Jesus,* which is the image of virtues.

* Ps. xxxviii 6. † 1 Cor. xv 49.

CHAPTER LXXXVII

HOW WE SHOULD CRUCIFY THE IMAGE OF SIN, AND QUICKEN THE IMAGE OF JESUS

WHAT then shalt thou do with this image? I answer thee by the words that the Jews said to Pilate of Christ: *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum! Take thou* this body of sin *and do Him upon the cross;** that is to say, Break down this image, and slay the false love of sin in thyself. As Christ's body was slain for our trespass, right so it behoveth thee—if thou wilt be like to Christ—to slay thy bodily liking and fleshly lust in thyself. Thus said Saint Paul: *These, that are Christ's followers, have crucified and slain their flesh,* that is the image of sin, *with all the lusts and unskilful likings of it.*†

Slay then and break down pride, and set up meekness. Also break down ire and envy, and raise up love and charity to thine even-Christian. Also, instead of covetousness have poverty of spirit, instead of accidie‡ have fervour of devotion, with a glad readiness to all good deeds, and in the stead of gluttony and lechery have sobriety and chastity in body and in soul. Thus counselled Saint Paul when he said thus: *Ye shall*

* John xix 15. † Gal. v 24.
‡ Accidie—*i.e.*, spiritual sloth.

put down the old man, that is the image of sin of the old Adam, *with all his members, for he is rotten in desires of error, and ye shall shape you and clothe you in a new man, which is the image of God by holiness and righteousness and fulness of virtues.** Who shall help thee to break down this image? Soothly thy Lord, Jesu. In the virtue and in the name of Him shalt thou break down this idol of sin. Pray Him busily and desire, and He shall help thee.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

WHAT PROFIT COMETH OF KEEPING OF THE HEART, AND HOW MUCH THE SOUL IS, AND WHAT IT LOVETH

GATHER then thy heart together and do after the counsel of the Wise Man, when he saith thus: *With all thy business keep thine heart, for out of it cometh life.*† And this is sooth when it is well kept, for then wise thoughts, clean affections, and burning desires of virtues and of charity and of the bliss of heaven come out of it, and make the soul to live a blessed life. Also on the contrary wise, if it be not kept, then as our Lord saith in the gospel: *Evil thoughts and unclean affections come out of the heart, the which*

* Eph. iv 22, 24. † Prov. iv 23.

*defoul man.** They either injure the life of the soul by deadly sin, or else they feeble the soul and make it sick if they be venial. For what is a man but his thoughts and his loves? These only make a man good or bad. As much as thou lovest God and thine even-Christian and knowest Him, so much is thy soul; and if thou little love Him, little is thy soul; and if thou naught love Him, naught is thy soul. It is naught as for good, but it is much as for sin. And if thou wilt wit what thou lovest, look whereupon thou thinkest; for where the love is there is the eye, and where the liking is there is most the heart thinking. If thou love God much, it liketh thee to think much upon Him; and if thou love little, then little thou thinkest upon Him. Rule well thy thoughts and thine affections, and then art thou virtuous.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

HOW THE IMAGE OF SIN SHALL BE BROKEN DOWN

BEGIN then on, and break this image when thou hast inwardly bethought thee of thyself and of thy wretchedness, as I have said; how proud, how vain, how envious, how melancholious, how covetous, how fleshly, and how

* Matt. xv 19, 20.

full of corruption; also how little knowing, feeling or savour thou hast of God and of ghostly things, how wise, how quick and how much savour thou hast in earthly things, and shortly that thou think thee also full of sin as the hide is full of flesh. Be thou not too much adread, though thou think so of thyself. And when thou hast done thus, lift up then the desire of thy heart to thy Lord Jesus, and pray of Him help. Cry to Him by great desires and sighings that He will help thee to bear this great burden of this image, or else that He will break it. Think also what a shame it is for thee to be fed with swines' meat of fleshly savours that shouldest feel a ghostly savour of heavenly joy. If thou do thus, then beginnest thou to arise against the whole ground of sin in thee as I have said. And it may so be that thou shalt feel pain and sorrow, for thou shalt understand that there may no soul live without great pain, unless he have rest and delight either in his creator or in a creature. Then when thou risest against thyself by a fervent desire to feel of thy Lord Jesus, and to draw out of thy love from all bodily things and from rest in thy bodily feeling, inasmuch as thou art encumbered of thyself, and thou thinkest that all creatures rise against thee, and all things which thou hadst delight in before turn for thee to pain. And when

thou forsakest thus thyself and may not lightly find comfort in God, needlings thy soul shall suffer pain. Nevertheless I hope whoso would suffer this pain awhile, steadfastly cleaving upon this desire and naked mind of Jesus Christ, and upon desire that he have not but his Lord and fall not lightly therefrom, nor seek no comfort outward for a time—for it lasteth not long—our Lord is nigh and soon shall ease thy heart, for He will help thee to bear thy body full of corruption, and He will with His merciful might of gracious presence break down this false image of love in thyself, not all at once, but by little and by little, till thou be some deal reformed to His likeness.

CHAPTER XC

HOW A MAN SHALL BEHAVE HIM TO THE STIRRING OF PRIDE AND OF ALL OTHER VICES

After such a whole rising against thyself, when it is passed, thou shalt more soberly and more easily rule thyself and set thee more sadly to keep thy thoughts and thine affections, to know them whether they be good or bad. And then if thou feel a stirring in pride in any manner of species of it, be soon wary if thou mayest, and suffer it not

to scape lightly away, but take it in mind and rend it, break it and despise it, and do all the shame that thou mayest thereto. Look thou spare it not nor trow it not, speak he never so fair, for it is false though it seemeth sooth, as the prophet saith: *Thou man of my people, they that say thou art blessed* and holy, *they beguile and bring thee into error.** And if thou do thus often busily, thou shalt, by the grace of Jesus, within short time stop much of the spring of pride, and much abate the vain delight thereof, so that thou shalt scarcely feel it. And when thou feelest it, it shall be so weak and as if it were half dead, that it shall not much grieve thee. And then thou shalt be able to have a ghostly sight of meekness, how good and how fair it is, and thou shalt desire it and love it for the goodness of itself, that thou shalt like to be holden as thou art, and if need be to suffer gladly despite and reproof for love of righteousness. Upon the same manner, when thou feelest stirrings of ire and of melancholy rising of heart, or any evil will against thine even-Christian for any manner of cause, though it seem reasonable and for charity, beware of it and be ready with thy thought to refrain it that it turn not into fleshly appetite. Withstand it and follow it not, neither in word nor in deed, as much as

* Isa. iii 12.

thou mayest, but as it riseth smite it down again, and so shalt thou slay it with the sword of dread of God that it shall not grieve thee. For wit thou well that in all these stirrings of pride, vainglory, envy, or any other, as soon as thou perceivest it and with displeasure of thy will and of thy reason withstandest it, thou slayest it, though it be so that it cleave still upon thy heart against thy will, and will not lightly pass away. Dread it not; for it letteth thy soul from peace, but it defileth not thy soul. Right so upon the same wise shalt thou do against all evil stirrings of covetousness, accidie, gluttony and lechery, that thou be always ready with thy reason and thy will to reprove them and despise them.

CHAPTER XCI

WHAT THING HELPETH MOST A MAN'S KNOWING, AND GETTETH HIM THAT WHICH HE LACKETH, AND MOST DESTROYETH SIN IN HIM

And that mayest thou do the better and the more readily if thou be busy to set thine heart most upon one thing. And that thing is naught else but a ghostly desire to God, to please Him, to love Him, to know Him, to see Him, and to have Him by grace here in a

little feeling and in the bliss of heaven in a full being. This desire, if thou keep it, shall well tell thee which is sin and which is not, and which is good and which is better good. And if thou wilt fasten thy thought thereto, it shall teach thee all that thou needest, and it shall get thee all that thou wantest. And therefore, when thou shalt rise against the ground of sin in general or else in any special sin, hang fast upon this desire, and set the point of thy thought more upon God whom thou desirest than upon the sin which thou reprovest. For if thou do so, then God fighteth for thee, and He shall destroy sin in thee. Thou shalt much sooner come to thy purpose if thou do so, than if thou leave thy meek desire to God principally, and will set thine heart only against the stirring of sin, as though thou wouldest destroy it by mastery of thyself. Thou shalt never so bring it about.

CHAPTER XCII

HOW A MAN SHALL BE SHAPEN TO THE IMAGE OF JESUS, AND JESUS SHAPEN IN HIM

But do as I have said and better if thou mayest, and I hope by the grace of Jesus thou shalt make the devil ashamed, and all such wicked stirrings thou shalt break away, that

they shall not much grieve thee. And upon this manner wise may the image of sin be broken down in thee and destroyed, by the which thou art forshapen from the kindly shape of Christ's image. And thou shalt be shapen again to the image of Jesus man by meekness and charity; and thou shalt be full shapen to the self image of God, here living by shadow in contemplation, and in the bliss of heaven in full soothfastness. Of this shaping to the likeness of Christ speaketh Saint Paul thus: *My dear children, which I bear, as a woman beareth her child, until Christ be again shapen in you.** Thou hast conceived Christ by troth, and He hath life in thee inasmuch as thou hast a good will and a desire to serve Him and please Him, but He is not yet full shapen in thee nor thou in Him by fulness of charity. And therefore Saint Paul bare thee and me and other also with travail, as a woman beareth a child, unto the time that Christ hath His full shape in us and we in Him. Whoso weeneth to come to the working and to the full use of contemplation and not by this way, that is to say not by fulhead of virtues, he cometh not by the door, and therefore as a thief he shall be cast out. I say not but that a man may by the gift of God have by times a tasting and a glimmering of life contem-

* Gal. iv 19.

plative, as do some men in the beginning; but the sad feeling of it he shall not have. For Christ is the door and He is porter, and without His life and His livery may there no man come in, as He saith Himself: *No man cometh to the Father but by Me.** That is to say, no man may come to the contemplation of the godhead, unless he be first reformed by fulness of meekness and charity to the likeness of Jesus in His manhood.

CHAPTER XCIII

THE CAUSE WHY THIS BOOK WAS MADE, AND HOW SHE SHOULD BEHAVE HER IN READING THEREOF THAT IT WAS MADE FOR.

Lo I have told thee a little as methinketh, first of contemplative life what it is, and then of the ways which by grace lead thereto. Not that I have it in feeling and in working as I have it in saying. Nevertheless I would by these words, such as they are, first stir mine own negligence to do better then I have done, and also my purpose is to stir thee or any other man or woman that hath taken the state of life contemplative to travail more busily and more meekly in that manner of life by such simple words as God hath given me grace to say. And therefore if any word

* John xiv 6.

be therein that stirreth thee or comforteth thee more to the love of God, thank God, for it is His gift and not of the word. And if it comfort thee not, or else thou take it not readily, study nor too long thereabout, but lay it beside thee till another time, and give thee to prayer or to other occupation. Take it as it will come, and not all at once. Also these words that I write, take them not too strictly, but where thou thinkest by good advisement* that I speak too shortly, either for lacking of English or wanting of reason, I pray thee amend it only where need is. Also these words that I write to thee, they belong not at all to a man that hath active life, but to thee or to any other which hath the state of life contemplative.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with thee.

* Advisement—*i.e.*, counsel.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

THAT A MAN IS THE IMAGE OF GOD AFTER THE SOUL AND NOT AFTER THE BODY

FORASMUCH as thou covetest greatly and askest it for charity to hear more of an image the which I have beforetimes in part described to thee, therefore I will gladly with dread fall to thy desire, and, helping the grace of our Lord Jesus in whom I fully trust, I shall open thee a little more of this image. At the beginning, if thou wilt wit plainly what I mean by this image, I tell thee forsooth that I understand naught else but thine own soul. For thy soul and my soul and every reasonable soul is an image, and that a worthy image, for it is the image of God as the apostle saith: *A man is the image of God*,* and made to the image and the likeness of Him; not in the bodily shape without but in the mights of it within, as Holy Writ saith: *Our Lord God shaped man* in his soul *to His own image and likeness*.† This

* 1 Cor. xi 7. † Gen. i 27.

is the image that I have spoken of. This image, made to the image of God, in the first shaping was wonderfully fair and bright, full of burning love and ghostly light, but through sin of the first man Adam it was disfigured and forshapen into another likeness, as I have said before. For it fell from that ghostly light and heavenly food into painful darkness and lust of this wretched life; exiled and cast out from the heritage of heaven that it should have had if it had stood still, into the wretchedness of this earth, and afterwards into the prison of hell there to have been without end. From the which prison to the heavenly heritage it might never have come again unless it had been reformed to the first shape and the first likeness. But that reforming might not be made by none earthly man, for every man was in the same mischief, and none might suffice to help himself and so much less another man. Therefore it needed to be done by Him that is more than man, that is only God; and that was skilful that He should reform and restore man to bliss if he should be saved, which of His endless goodness first shaped him thereto. How then it might be reformed, and how it is reformed to the first likeness by Him that first formed it, by the grace of God shall I tell thee; for that is the intent of this writing.

CHAPTER II

HOW MANKIND NEEDETH THAT, ONLY THROUGH THE PASSION OF CHRIST, WHAT WAS FORSHAPEN BY THE FIRST SIN SHOULD BE RESTORED AND REFORMED

THE righteousness of God asketh that a trespass done be not forgiven, unless amends be made for it, if it may be done. Now it is sooth mankind, that was whole in Adam the first man, trespassed against God so wonder grievously, when it forfeited the special bidding of Him and assented to the false counsel of the fiend, that it deserved rightfully to have been departed from Him and damned to hell without end; so far forth that, standing the righteousness of God, it might not be forgiven, unless amends and full satisfaction were first made therefor. But this amends might no man make that was man only and came out of Adam by kindly generation, for this reason, because the trespass and unworship was endless great, wherefore it passed man's might to make amends for it. And also for this reason: he that hath trespassed and shall make amends, it behoveth him to give to him that he hath trespassed against, all that he oweth though he had not trespassed; and also above that it behoveth

him to give somewhat that he oweth not but only because he trespassed. But mankind had not wherewith that he might pay God for his trespass, over that he owed Him. For what good deed a man might do in body or in soul, it was but his debt. For every man oweth, as the Gospel saith, to love God with all his heart and all his soul and all his mights; and better might he not do than this. And nevertheless this deed sufficed not the reforming of mankind, nor might he do this unless he were first reformed. Then needeth it that, if man's soul should be reformed and the trespass made good, our Lord Himself should reform this image and make amends for this trespass since no man might do this. But that He might not do in His godhead; for He might not nor owed He to make amends by suffering of pain in His own kind. Therefore it needed that He should take the same mankind that had trespassed, and become man; and that He might not do by the common law of generation, for it was impossible for God's son to be born of a touched woman. Therefore He must become man through a gracious generation, by the working of the Holy Ghost, of a clean gracious maiden, our Lady Saint Mary. And so it was done. For our Lord Jesus, God's Son, became man, and through His precious death that He suffered

made amends to the Father of Heaven for man's guilt. And that might He well do, for He was God, and He owed not for Himself, but inasmuch as He was man born of the same kind that Adam was that first trespassed. And so though He owed it not for His own person, for Himself might not sin, nevertheless He owed it of His freewill for the trespass of mankind, the which mankind He took for the salvation of man of His endless mercy. For sooth it is there was never man that might yield to God anything of his own that he owed not, but only this blessed Jesus. For He might pay God one thing that He owed not as for Himself, and that was naught but one thing; that was to give His precious life by wilful taking of death for love of soothfastness. This owed He not. As much good as He might do to the worship of God in this life, all was but debt. But to take death for love of righteousness He was not bound thereto. For death is only a pain ordained to man for his own sin; but our Lord Jesus sinned never nor might He sin, and therefore He owed not to die. And since He owed not to die and yet wilfully He died, then paid He to God more than He owed. And since that was the best man's deed and most worthy that ever was done, therefore was it just that the sin of mankind should be forgiven; inasmuch as

mankind had found a man of the same kind without venom of sin, that is Jesus, that might make amends for the trespass done, and pay our Lord God all that he owed and over more that He owed not. Then since our Lord Jesus, God and man, died thus for salvation of man's soul, it was rightful that sin should be forgiven and man's soul, that was His image, should be reformed and restored to the first likeness and to the bliss of heaven.

This passion of our Lord and this precious death is the ground of all the reforming of man's soul, without which might never man's soul have been reformed to the likeness of Him nor come to the bliss of heaven. But blessed may He be in all His working. Now is it so that, through the virtue of His precious passion, the burning sword of cherubin that drove Adam out of paradise is put away, and the endless gates of heaven are open to every man that will enter in thereto. For the person of Jesus is both God and King of heaven in the bliss of the Father, and as man He is porter at the gate ready to receive every soul that will be reformed here in this life to His likeness. For now may every soul, if he will, be reformed to the likeness of God; since the trespass is forgiven and amends through Jesus is made for the first guilt. Nevertheless, though this be sooth, all souls have not

the profit nor the fruit of this precious passion, nor are all reformed to the likeness of Him.

CHAPTER III

THAT JEWS AND PAYNIMS AND ALSO FALSE CHRISTIAN MEN ARE NOT REFORMED EFFECTUALLY THROUGH THE VIRTUE OF THE PASSION, THROUGH THEIR OWN FAULT

Two manner of men are not reformed by the virtue of this passion. One is of them that trow it not, and another is of them that love it not. Jews and paynims have not the benefice of this passion, for they trow it not. Jews trow not that Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary, is God's son of heaven. Also the paynims trow not that the sovereign wisdom of God would become the son of man, and in manhood would suffer the pain of death. And therefore the Jews held the preaching of the cross and of the passion of Christ naught but slander and blasphemy, and the paynims held it naught but phantom and folly. But true Christian men held it the sovereign wisdom of God, and His great might. Thus saith Saint Paul: *We preach to you that we trow, that Jesus Christ crucified,* the son of Mary, *is God's son, sovereign virtue and wisdom of God. The*

*which Jesus to Jews and paynims that trow not in Him is but slander and folly.** And therefore these men, by their untroth, put themselves from the reforming of their own souls, and standing their untroth, shall they never be saved nor come to the bliss of heaven. For sooth it is, from the beginning of the world unto the last end, there was never man saved nor shall be saved, unless he had troth general or special in Jesus Christ to come or come. For right as all chosen souls that were before the Incarnation under the Old Testament had troth in Christ, that He should come and reform man's soul, either openly as patriarchs and prophets and other holy men had, or else privily and generally as children and other simple and imperfect souls had that knew not specially the privity of the Incarnation: right so all chosen souls under the New Testament have troth in Christ that He is come, either openly and feelingly as ghostly men and wise men have, or else generally as children have that die christened, and other simple and lewd souls that are nourished in the bosom of Holy Church. Since this is sooth, then methinketh that these men greatly and grievously err who say that Jews and Saracens, by keeping of their own law, may be made safe, though they trow not in Jesus Christ as Holy Church

* 1 Cor. i 23, 24.

troweth; inasmuch as they ween that their own troth is good and secure and sufficient to their salvation. And in that troth they do, as it seems, many good deeds of righteousness, and peradventure if they knew that Christian faith were better than their own is, they would leave their own and take it, and therefore they should be saved. Nay, it is not enough so. For Christ, God and man, is both way and end, and He is mediator betwixt God and man, and without Him may no soul be reconciled nor come to the bliss of heaven. And they that trow not in Him that is both God and man may never be safe nor come to bliss. Other men also that love not Christ nor His passion are not reformed in the soul to the likeness of Him; and these men are false Christian men, the which are out of charity and live and die in deadly sin. These men trow well, as it seemeth, that Jesus is God's son, and that His passion sufficeth to salvation of man's soul, and they trow also all the other articles of the faith; but it is an unhappy troth and a deadly, for they love Him not nor choose not the fruit of His passion, but they lie still in their sin, and in the false love of this world unto their last end. And so they are not reformed to the likeness of God, but go to the pains of hell endlessly, as Jews and Saracens do, and into much greater pain than they, inasmuch as

they had the troth and kept it not. For it was more trespass than if they never had it.

Then if thou wilt wit which souls are reformed here in this life to the image of God through virtue of His passion, soothly only those that trow in Him and love Him. In which souls the image of God, that was forshapen as it were into a foul beast's likeness, is restored and reformed to the first shape, and to the worthiness and worship that it had in the beginning; without which restoring and reforming shall never soul be saved nor come to bliss.

CHAPTER IV

OF TWO MANNER OF REFORMING OF THIS IMAGE, ONE IN FULNESS AND ANOTHER IN FAITH

Now, sayest thou, how may this be sooth that the image of God, the which is man's soul, might be reformed here in this life to His likeness in any creature? It seemeth nay, it might not be so. For if it were reformed, then should it have stable mind, clear sight, and clean burning love in God and ghostly things everlastingly, as it had in the beginning. But that is in no creature, as thou trowest, living here in this life. For as anent thyself thou canst well say thou think-

est thee full far therefrom. Thy mind, thy reason, and the love of thy soul are so much set in beholding and in love of earthly things, that of ghostly things thou feelest right little. Thou feelest no reforming in thyself, but thou art so encompassed with this black image of sin for aught thou mayest do, that upon what side thou turn thee thou feelest thyself defouled and spotted with fleshly stirrings of this foul image. Other changing feelest thou none from fleshliness into ghostliness; neither in privy mights of thy soul within, nor in bodily feeling without. Wherefore thou thinkest that it might not be that this image might be reformed; or else if it might be reformed, then askest thou how it might be reformed. To this I answer and say thus. There is two manner of reforming of the image of God which is man's soul. One is in fulness, another is in part. Reforming in fulness may not be had in this life, but it is delayed after this life to the bliss of heaven, where man's soul shall be fully reformed; not to the state that it had at the first beginning by kind, or might have had through grace if it had stood whole, but it shall be restored to much more bliss and much higher joy through the great mercy and endless goodness of God, than it should have had if it had never fallen. For then shall the soul receive the whole and the full

feeling of God in all the mights of it, without mingling of any other affection; and it shall see mankind in the person of Jesus above the kind of angels oned to the Godhead. For then shall Jesus, both God and man, be all in all, and only He and none other but He, as the prophet saith: *Our Lord Jesus in that day* that is everlasting day *shall be highed only*,* and none but He. And also the body of man shall then be glorified, for it shall receive fully the rich dowry of undeadliness with all that belongeth thereto. This shall a soul have with the body, and much more than I can say: but that shall be in the bliss of heaven and not in this life. For though it be so that the passion of our Lord is the cause of all this reforming of man's soul, nevertheless it was not His will to grant this full reforming right soon after His passion to all chosen souls that were living in time of His passion, but He delayed it unto the last day. And that was for this reason. Sooth it is that our Lord Jesus Christ of His mercy ordained a certain number of souls to salvation, which number was not fulfilled in the time of His passion. And therefore it needed that by length of time, through kindly generation of man, it should be fulfilled. Then if it had so been that right soon after the death of our Lord every soul that would have

* Isa. ii 11.

trowed in Him should by belief have been blessed and full reformed without any other abiding, there would have been no creature that lived then, that would not have received the faith to have been made blessed, and then should generation have ceased. And so we, chosen souls that are now living, and other souls that come after us, should not have been born, and so should our Lord have failed of His number. But that may not be. And therefore our Lord purveyed much better for us in that He delayed the full reforming of man's soul till the last end, as Saint Paul saith: *Our Lord purveyed better for us in the delay of our reforming than if He had granted it then, for this skill; that the chosen souls here before should not make a full end without us that come after.** Another reason is this. For seeing that man in his first forming of God was set in his free will and had free choosing whether he would have God fully or not, it was therefore reasonable that (since he would not choose God then, but wretchedly fell from Him), if he should afterwards be reformed, he should be set again in the same free choosing that he was first in, whether he would have the profit of his reforming or no. And this may be a reason why man's soul was not reformed fully, as fast after the passion of Christ.

* Heb. xi 40.

CHAPTER V

THAT REFORMING IN PART IS IN TWO MANNERS, ONE IN FAITH AND ANOTHER IN FEELING

ANOTHER reforming of this image is in part; and this reforming may be had in this life, and unless it be had in this life, it may never be had, nor the soul ever be saved. But this reforming is on two manners. One is in faith only, another is in faith and in feeling. The first reforming in faith only sufficeth to salvation; the second is worthy to have passing meed in the bliss of heaven. The first may be had lightly and in short time, the second may not so, but through length of time and much ghostly travail. The first may be had with the feeling of the image of sin; for though a man feel nothing in himself but all stirrings of sin and fleshly desires, notwithstanding that feeling, if he wilfully assent thereto, he may be reformed in faith to the likeness of God. But the second reforming putteth out the liking in feeling of fleshly stirrings and worldly desires, and suffereth no such spots to abide in this image. The first reforming is only of beginning and profiting souls, and of active men. The second is of perfect souls and of contemplative men. For by the first reforming the image

of sin is not destroyed, but it is left as it were all whole in feeling. But the second reforming destroyeth the old feelings of this image of sin, and bringeth into the soul new gracious feelings through the working of the Holy Ghost. The first is good, the second is better, but the third that is in the bliss of heaven is most best. First let us speak of that one, and next of that other; and so shall we come to the third.

CHAPTER VI

THAT THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM, THAT IS GROUNDED IN THE PASSION OF CHRIST, THIS IMAGE IS REFORMED FROM ORIGINAL SIN

Two manner of sins maketh a soul to lose the shape and the likeness of God. The one is called original, that is the first sin. The other is called actual, that is sin wilfully done. These two sins put away a soul from the bliss of heaven, and damn it to the endless pain of hell, unless through the grace of God it be reformed to His likeness, ere it pass hence out of this life. Nevertheless, two remedies are there against these two sins, by the which a forshapen soul may be restored again. One is the sacrament of baptism against original sin, another is the sacrament

of penance against actual sin. A soul of a child, that is born and is unchristened, because of original sin hath no likeness of God; he is naught but an image of the fiend and a brand of hell. But as soon as it is christened, it is reformed to the image of God, and through the virtue of faith of Holy Church suddenly it is turned from the likeness of the fiend and made like an angel of heaven. Also the same falleth to a Jew or a Saracen, the which ere they are christened are naught but manciples* of hell. But when they forsake their errors and fall meekly to the truth in Christ and receive the baptism of water in the Holy Ghost, soothly without any more tarrying they are reformed to the likeness of God so fully, as Holy Church troweth, that if they might as soon after baptism pass out of this world, they should flee straight to heaven without any more letting, had they done never so much sin before in the time of their untroth, and never should they feel the pain of hell nor of purgatory. And that privilege should they have by the right of Christ's passion.

* Manciples—*i.e.*, slaves.

CHAPTER VII

THAT THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE THAT STANDETH IN CONTRITION, CONFESSION AND SATISFACTION, THIS IMAGE IS REFORMED FROM ACTUAL SIN

Also what man or woman that hath lost the likeness of God through a deadly sin, breaking God's commandments, if he through touch of grace soothfastly forsake his sin with sorrow and contrition of heart, and be in full will to amend him and turn him to good living, and in this foresaid will receiveth the sacrament of penance if he may—or if he may not he is in will thereto—soothly I say that this man's soul or woman's, that was forshapen first to the likeness of the devil through deadly sin, is now by the sacrament of penance restored and shapen again to the image of our Lord God. This is a great courtesy of our Lord and an endless mercy that so lightly forgiveth all manner of sin, and so suddenly giveth plenty of grace to a sinful soul that asketh mercy of Him. He abideth not great penance doing nor painful fleshly suffering ere He forgive it. But He asketh a loathing of sin, and a full forsaking in will of the soul for the love of Him, and a turning of the heart to Him. This asketh

He, for this giveth He. And then, when He seeth this, without any delaying He forgiveth the sin, and reformeth the soul to His likeness. The sin is forgiven that the soul shall not be damned. Nevertheless, the pain debted for the sin is not yet fully forgiven, unless contrition and love be the more. And therefore shall he go and show him and shrive him to his ghostly Father and receive penance enjoined for his trespass and gladly fulfil it; so that both the sin and the pain may be done away ere he pass hence. And that is the skilful ordinance of Holy Church for great profit of man's soul; that though the sin be forgiven through the virtue of contrition, nevertheless, in fulfilling of meekness and to make whole satisfaction, he shall, if he may, show to his priest plenary confession, for that is his token and his warranty of forgiveness against all his enemies, and that is needful to have. For if a man had forfeited his life against a king of this earth, it were not enough to him as for a full security to have only forgiveness of the king, unless he have a charter the which may be his token and his warrant against all other men. Right so it may be said ghostly. If a man have forfeited against the King of heaven his life through deadly sin, it is not enough to him for full security to have forgiveness of God only by contrition between God and

him, unless he have a charter made by Holy Church if he may come thereto. And that is the sacrament of penance, the which is his charter and his token of forgiveness. For seeing that he forfeited both against God and Holy Church, it is reasonable that he have forgiveness for that one, and a warrant for that other. And this is one reason why confession is needful. Another reason is this: for since this reforming of the soul standeth in faith only and not in feeling, therefore a fleshly man, that is rude and boisterous and cannot lightly deem but of outward bodily things, should not trow that his sins had been forgiven him unless he had had some bodily token, and that is confession, through the which token he is made all secure of forgiveness if he do what in him is. This is the troth of Holy Church as I understand it. Also another reason is this: though the ground of forgiveness stand not principally in confession but in contrition of the heart and in forethinking of sin, nevertheless I hold that there is many a soul that should never have felt very contrition nor had the full forsaking of sin if confession had not been. For it befalleth often that in the time of confession grace and compunction come to a soul that before never felt grace, but ever was cold and dry and far from feeling of grace. And therefore since confession was so

profitable to the more part of Christian men, Holy Church ordained, for the more security generally to all Christian men, that every man and woman should once in the year at least be shriven of all their sins that come to their mind, to their ghostly father, though they had never so much contrition beforetime. Nevertheless I think that, if all men had been as busy about the keeping of themselves in eschewing of all manner sin and had come to as much great knowing and feeling of God as some men have, Holy Church should not have ordained the token of confession as for needful bond, for it had not needed. But because all men are not perfect—and peradventure the most part of Christian men is imperfect—therefore Holy Church ordained confession by way of general bond to all Christian men, that will know Holy Church as their mother and will be buxom to her bidding. If this be sooth, as I hope it is, then he erreth greatly that generally saith that confession of sins to a priest is neither needful to a sinner nor behoveable, and that no man is bound thereto. For by that which I have said it is both needful and speedful to all souls that in this wretched life are defiled through sin, and namely to those that are through deadly sin forshapen from the likeness of God, the which may not be reformed to His likeness except by the sacrament of penance, that

principally standeth in contrition and sorrow of heart, and secondarily in shrift of mouth following after it, if it may be had. Upon this manner, by this sacrament of penance, is a sinful soul reformed to the image of God and to His likeness.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW IN THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM AND OF PENANCE, THROUGH A PRIVY UNPERCEIVABLE WORKING OF THE HOLY GHOST, THIS IMAGE IS REFORMED THOUGH IT BE NOT SEEN NOR FELT

But this reform standeth in faith and not in feeling; for right as the property of faith is to trow what thou seest not, right so it is to trow what thou feelest not. But he that is reformed in his soul by the sacrament of penance to the image of God, he feeleth no changing in himself, neither in his bodily kind without, nor in the privy substance of his soul within, other than he did. For he is as he was unto his feeling, and he feeleth the same stirrings of sin and the same corruption of his flesh in passions and worldly desires rising in his heart as he did before. And nevertheless he shall trow that he is through grace reformed to the likeness of God, though he neither feel it nor see it. He may well

feel sorrow for his sin and a turning of his will from sin to cleanness of living, if he have grace and take good keep of himself. But he may neither see nor feel the reforming of his soul, how it is wonderly and unperceivably changed from the filth of the fiend unto the fairness of an angel through the privy gracious working of the Holy Ghost. That may he not see, but he shall trow it; and if he trow it, then is his soul reformed in truth. For right as Holy Church troweth that by the sacrament of baptism soothfastly received a Jew or a Saracen or a child born is reformed in soul to the likeness of God through a privy unperceivable working of the Holy Ghost, notwithstanding all the fleshly stirrings of his body of sin, the which he shall feel after his baptism as well as he did before; right so by the sacrament of penance meekly and truly received, a false Christian man that hath been encumbered with deadly sin all his lifetime is reformed in his soul within unperceivably, out-taking a turning of his will through a privy might and a gracious working of the Holy Ghost that suddenly worketh and, in time of a moment or the twinkling of an eye, righteth a froward soul and turneth it from ghostly filth to fairness unseeable, and of a servant of the fiend maketh a son of joy, and of the prisoner of hell maketh a perceiver of heavenly heritage, notwithstanding all the

fleshly feeling of this sinful image that is the bodily kind. For thou shalt understand that the sacrament of baptism or of penance is not of that virtue to let and destroy utterly all the stirrings of fleshly lusts and painful passions, that a man's soul may never feel no manner rising nor stirring of them at any time. For if it were so, then were a soul fully reformed here to the worship of the first making: but that may not be fully in this life. But it is of that virtue that it cleanseth the soul from all the sins beforedone, and if it depart from the body saveth it from damnation, and if it dwell in the body it giveth the soul grace to withstand the stirrings of sin, and keepeth it in grace also, that no manner of lusty stirrings of passions that it feeleth in the flesh, be they never so grievous, shall hurt it nor depart it from God, as long as it wilfully assenteth not thereto. This Saint Paul meaned when he said thus: *Those souls that are reformed to the image of God in faith through the sacrament of baptism or of penance shall not be damned for feelings of this image of sin, if it be so that they go not after the stirrings of the flesh by doing of deed.**

* Rom. viii 1.

CHAPTER IX

THAT WE SHOULD BELIEVE STEADFASTLY IN THE REFORMING OF THIS IMAGE, IF OUR CONSCIENCE WITNESS TO US A FULL FORSAKING OF SIN AND A TRUE TURNING OF OUR WILL TO GOOD LIVING

Of this reforming in faith speaketh Saint Paul thus: *The righteous man liveth in faith.** That is, he that is made rightful by baptism or by penance he liveth in faith, which sufficeth unto salvation and to heavenly peace, as Saint Paul saith: *We that are righted and reformed through faith in Christ have peace and accord made between God and us,*† notwithstanding the vicious feelings of our body of sin. For though this reforming be privy and may not well be felt here in this life, nevertheless whoso troweth it steadfastly and shapeth his works busily to accord to his troth, and turneth not again to deadly sin, soothly when the hour of death cometh, and the soul is departed from this bodily life, then he shall find it sooth that I say now. Thus saith Saint John in comfort of chosen souls that live here in faith under the feeling of this painful image: *My dear friends, we are now while we live here the sons of God,* for we

* Heb. x 38. † Rom. v 1.

are reformed by faith in Christ to His likeness; *but it showeth not yet what we are*, for it is all privy. *Nevertheless know well that when our Lord shall show Him at the last day, then shall we appear with Him like unto Him in endless joy.** If thou wilt wit then whether thy soul be reformed to the image of God or no, by that I have said thou mayest have entry. Ransack thy conscience and look what thy will is, for therein standeth all. If it be turned from all manner of deadly sin, that thou wouldest for nothing wittingly and wilfully break the commandments of God, and for what thou hast misdone herebefore against His bidding thou hast shriven thee meekly with full heart to leave it, and art sorry that thou didst it, I say then surely that thy soul is reformed in faith to the likeness of God.

CHAPTER X

THAT ALL THE SOULS THAT LIVE MEEKLY IN THE FAITH OF HOLY CHURCH AND HAVE THEIR FAITH QUICKENED IN LOVE AND CHARITY ARE REFORMED BY THIS SACRAMENT, ALBEIT THAT THEY MAY NOT FEEL THE SPECIAL GIFT OF DEVOTION OR OF GHOSTLY FEELING

In this reforming that is only in faith, the most part of chosen souls lead their life, that

* 1 John iii 2.

set their will steadfastly to flee all manner of deadly sin, and to keep in love and charity to their even-Christians, and to keep the commandments of God after their cunning. And when it so is that wicked stirrings and evil wills rise in their hearts, of pride or of envy, of ire or lechery, or of any other head of sin, they withstand them and strive against them by displeasing of will, so that they follow not in deed these wicked wills. And nevertheless if they fall lightly, as it were against their will, through frailty or uncunning, anon their conscience grieveth them and paineth them so grievously, that they may have no rest till they be shriven and have forgiveness. Soothly all these souls that thus live in this reforming and are found therein in the hour of death, they shall be saved and come to the full reforming in the bliss of heaven, though it be so that they might never have ghostly feeling nor inward savour nor special grace of devotion in all their lifetime. For else, if thou say that no soul shall be saved unless it were reformed in ghostly feeling that it might feel devotion and ghostly savour in God as some souls do through special grace, then should few souls be saved in regard of the multitude of the others.

Nay, it is not to trow that for those souls only that only are devout and by grace come to ghostly feeling, and for no more, our Lord

Jesus should have taken mankind and suffered the hard passion of death. It had been a little purchase to Him to have come from so far to so near, and from so high to so low for so few souls. Nay, His mercy is spread longer than so. Nevertheless, on the contrary wise, if thou trow that the passion of our Lord is so precious and His mercy so much that there shall no soul be damned, nor any Christian man do he never so evil, as some fools ween, soothly thou errest greatly. Therefore go in the mean and hold thee in the midst, and trow as Holy Church troweth. And that is that the most sinful man that liveth in earth, if he turn his will through grace from deadly sin with soothfast repentance to the service of God, he is reformed in his soul, and if he die in that state he shall be safe. Thus promised our Lord by His prophet, saying thus: *In what time soever it be that the sinful man is turned to God from sin and have sorrow, thenceforth he shall live and he shall not die endlessly.** And on the other side, whoso liveth in deadly sin and will not leave it nor amend him thereof, nor receive the sacrament of penance—or else if he receive it he taketh it not soothfastly for the love of God, that is for the love of virtue and cleanness, but only for dread of the pains of hell—he is not reformed to the likeness of

* Ezek. xviii 21.

God. And if he die in that plight he shall not be saved. His troth shall not save him, for his troth is dead and lacketh love, and therefore it serveth him not. But they that have troth quickened with love and charity are reformed to the likeness of God, though it be but the least degree of charity; as are simple souls which feel not the gift of special devotion nor ghostly knowing of God, as some ghostly men do, but trow generally as Holy Church troweth, and know not fully what that is, for it is not needful to them. And in that troth they keep them in love and charity to their even-Christians as they may, and flee all deadly sins after their cunning and do the deeds of mercy to their even-Christians. All these belong to the bliss of heaven. For it is written in the Apocalypse thus: *Ye that dread God, both small and great, thank Him.** By great are understood souls that are profiting in grace, or else perfect in love of God, the which are reformed in ghostly feeling. By small are understood souls imperfect, of worldly men and women, and other, that have but a child's knowledge of God and full little feeling of Him, but are brought forth in the bosom of Holy Church and nourished with the sacrament as children are fed with milk. All these shall love God and thank Him for salvation of their souls by

* Apoc. xix 5.

His endless mercy and goodness. For Holy Church that is mother of all these and hath tender love to all her children ghostly, prayeth and asketh for them all tenderly of her spouse, that is Jesus, and getteth them health of soul through virtue of His passion. And namely for them that cannot speak for themselves by ghostly prayer for their need. Thus I find in the Gospel that the woman of Canaan asked of our Lord health to her daughter that was travailed with a fiend, and our Lord made at first danger,* because she was an alien. Nevertheless she ceased not to cry, till our Lord had granted her asking and said to her thus: *O woman, much is thy troth, be it to thee right as thou wilt. In the same hour was her daughter whole.*† This woman betokeneth Holy Church that asketh help of our Lord for simple uncunning souls that are travailed with temptation of the world, and cannot speak perfectly to God by fervour of devotion nor burning love in contemplation. And though it seem that our Lord make danger first, because they are as it were alien from Him, nevertheless for the great troth and desert of Holy Church He granteth to her all that she will. And so these simple souls that trow steadfastly as Holy Church troweth, and put themselves fully in the mercy of God and meek them under the

* Danger—*i.e.*, refusal. † Matt. xv 28.

sacrament and laws of Holy Church, are made safe through prayer and troth of their mother Holy Church.

CHAPTER XI

THAT SOULS THAT ARE REFORMED NEED EVER TO FIGHT AND STRIVE AGAINST THE STIRRING OF SIN WHILE THEY LIVE HERE: AND HOW A SOUL MAY WIT WHEN IT ASSENTETH TO THE STIRRINGS AND WHEN NOT

THIS reforming in faith is lightly gotten, but it may not so lightly be held. And therefore what man or woman soever, who is reformed to the likeness of God in troth, must have much travail and business if they will keep this image whole and clean, that it fall not down again through weakness of will to the image of sin. He may not be idle nor reckless, for the image of sin is so near fastened to him and so continually presseth upon him by divers stirrings of sin, that unless he be right wary he shall full lightly through assent fall again thereto. And therefore he needeth ever to be striving and fighting against wicked stirrings of this image of sin, and to make none accord therewith, nor take no friendship to it to be buxom to his unskilful biddings; for if he do, he beguileth himself.

But soothly if he strive with them, he need not have much dread of assenting, for strife breaketh peace and false accord. It is good that a man have peace with all thing, save with the fiend and with this image of sin, for against them he needeth ever to fight, in his thought and in his deed, till he have gotten on them the mastery, and that shall never be fully in this life as long as he beareth and feeleth this image. I say not but that a soul through grace may have the higher hand over this image, so far forth that he shall not follow nor assent to the unskilful stirrings of it. But to be so clean delivered from this image that he should feel no suggestion nor jangling of fleshly affection nor of vain thought at any time, may no man have in this life. I hope that a soul that is reformed in feeling by ravishing of love in contemplation of God may be so far from sensuality and from vain imagination, and so far drawn out and departed from the fleshly feeling for a time, that it shall naught feel but God; but that lasteth not ever. And therefore say I that it behoveth every man to strive against this image of sin, and namely he that is reformed in faith only that so lightly may be deceived therewith. In the person of which men saith Saint Paul: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.**

* Gal. v 17.

That is, a soul reformed to the likeness of God fights against the fleshly stirrings of this image of sin, and also this image of sin striveth against the will of the spirit. This manner of fighting of this double image Saint Paul knew when he said thus: *I have found two laws in myself, one law in my soul within, and another in my fleshly limbs without fighting with it, that oft leadeth me as a wretched prisoner to the law of sin.** By these two laws in a soul I understand this double image: by the law of the spirit I understand the reason of the soul when it is reformed to the image of God; by the law of the flesh I understand the sensuality which I call the image of sin. In these two laws a soul reformed leadeth his life as Saint Paul saith: *In my soul*, that is in my will and in my reason, *I serve the law of God; but in my flesh*, that is in my fleshly appetite, *I serve the law of sin.*† Nevertheless that a soul reformed shall not despair, though he serve the law of sin by feeling of the vicious sensuality against the will of the spirit because of corruption of the bodily kind, Saint Paul excuseth it, saying thus of his own person: *I do not that good that I would do*, that is I would feel no fleshly stirring, and that do I not; *but I do that evil that I*

* Rom. vii 23.
† Rom. vii 25.

hate,* that is the sinful stirrings of my flesh I hate and yet I feel them. Nevertheless since it is so that I hate the wicked stirrings of my flesh, and yet I feel them and often delight in them against my will, they shall not be rehearsed against me for damnation as if I had done them. And why? because the corruption of this image of sin doth them and not I.

So Saint Paul in his person comforteth all souls that through grace are reformed in faith, that they should not too much dread the burden of this image with the unskilful stirrings thereof, if it be so that they assent not wilfully thereto. Nevertheless in this point many souls that are reformed in troth are oftentimes much tormented and troubled in vain, as thus: when they have felt fleshly stirrings of pride or envy, of covetousness or lechery, or of any other capital sin, they wit not sometimes whether they assent thereto or no, and that is no great wonder. For in time of temptation a frail man's thought is so troubled and so overlaid that he hath no clear sight nor freedom of himself, but is taken often with liking unwarily and goeth forth a great while before that he perceiveth it. And therefore some fall into doubt and dwere† whether they sinned in time of temptation or no.

* Rom. vii 19, 20. † Dwere—*i.e.*, doubt.

As anent this point I say as methinketh, that a soul may have assaying in this manner whether that he assent or no. If it be so that a man is stirred to any manner of sin, and the liking is so great in his fleshly feeling that it troubleth his reason and as it were with mastery occupieth the affection of the soul, nevertheless he keepeth him, that he followeth it not in deed, nor he would not if he might, but rather is it painful to him to feel the liking of that sin and fain he would put it away if he might, and then when the stirring is overpassed he is glad and well paid that he is delivered of it; by this assay may he wit that, were the liking never so great in the fleshly feeling, he assented not nor sinned not, namely deadly. Nevertheless a remedy there is that is secure to such a simple soul that is marred in itself and cannot help itself: that he be not too bold in himself, utterly weening that such fleshly stirrings with liking are no sins, for he might so fall into recklessness and into false security. Also let him be not too dreadful nor too simple in wit to deem them all as deadly sins, nor as great venials, for neither is sooth; but that he hold them all as sins and great wretchedness of himself, and that he have sorrow for them and be not too busy to deem them neither deadly nor venial. But if his conscience be greatly grieved let

him hastily go and show to his confessor in general or in special such stirrings; and namely every stirring that beginneth to fasten any root in the heart and most occupieth it, to draw it down to sin and worldly vanity. And then, when he is thus shriven generally or specially, let him trow steadfastly that they are forgiven and dispute no more about them that are passed and forgiven whether they were deadly or venial, but that he be more busy to keep him better against them that are coming. And if he do thus, then may he come to rest in conscience.

But then some are so fleshly and so uncunning that they would see or feel or hear their forgiveness of their sins as openly as they might feel and see a bodily thing. And forasmuch as they feel it not so, therefore they fall often in such dweres and doubts of themselves, and may never come to rest, and in that they are unwise, for faith goeth before feeling. Our Lord said to a man that was in the palsy when he healed him thus: *Son, trow steadfastly, thy sins are forgiven thee.** He said not to him, See or feel how thy sins are forgiven thee, for the forgiveness of sins is done ghostly and unseeably through grace of the Holy Ghost, but trow it. Right on the same wise every man that will come to rest in conscience, it behoveth him first,

* Mark ii 5.

if he do that in him is, to trow forgiveness of his sins without ghostly feeling. And if he first trow it, he shall afterward through grace feel it, and understand that it is so. Thus saith the apostle: *Unless ye first trow, ye may not understand.** Troth goeth before, and understanding cometh after. The which understanding, that I call the sight of God if it be gracious, a soul may not have but through great cleanness, as our Lord saith: *Blessed be clean of heart, for they shall see God.*† That is, they shall see God, not with their fleshly eye but with the inner eye, that is the understanding, cleansed and lightened through grace of the Holy Ghost to see soothfastness. The which cleanness a soul may not feel unless he have stable troth going before, as the apostle saith: *Our Lord cleanseth the hearts of His chosen through faith.*‡ Therefore it is needful that a soul trow first the reforming of himself made through the sacrament of penance, though he see it not, and that he dispose himself fully to live rightfully and virtuously as his troth asketh, so that he may after come to the sight and to the reforming in feeling.

* Isa. vii. † Matt. v 8.
‡ Acts xv 9.

CHAPTER XII

THAT THIS IMAGE IS BOTH FAIR AND FOUL WHILES IT IS IN THIS LIFE HERE, THOUGH IT BE REFORMED. AND OF DIVERSITY OF FEELINGS PRIVILY HAD BETWEEN THESE SOULS THAT ARE REFORMED AND OTHER THAT ARE NOT

FAIR is a man's soul, and foul is a man's soul. Fair inasmuch as it is reformed in faith to the likeness of God. But foul inasmuch as it is mixed with fleshly feelings and unskilful stirrings of this foul image of sin. Foul without as it were a beast, fair within like to an angel. Foul in feeling of the sensuality, fair in troth of the reason. Foul for the fleshly appetite, fair for the good will. Thus fair and thus foul is a chosen soul, saying in Holy Writ thus: *I am black but I am fair and shapely, ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tabernacles of cedar, as the skin of Solomon.** That is, ye angels of heaven that are daughters of the high Jerusalem, wonder not on me nor despise me for my black shadow; for though I be black because of my fleshly kind, as is a tabernacle of cedar, nevertheless I am full fair within as the skin of Solomon, for I am reformed to the likeness of God.

* Cant. i 4.

By cedar is understood a reproved soul, the which is a tabernacle of the devil. By Solomon is understood our Lord Jesus, for He is peace and peaceable. By the skin of Solomon is understood a blessed angel, in whom our Lord dwelleth and is hid, as is the life hid in the skin of a quick body, and therefore is an angel likened to a skin. Then may a chosen soul with meek trust in God and gladness of heart say thus: Though I be black because of my body of sin, as a reproved soul that is one of the tabernacles of the fiend, nevertheless I am within full fair through troth and goodwill, like to an angel of heaven. For so saith he in another place: *Behold me not that I am swart, for the sun hath defaced me.** The sun maketh a skin swart only without and not within, and it betokeneth this fleshly life. Therefore saith a chosen soul thus: Reprove me not because I am swart, for the swartness that I have is all without, of touching and of bearing of this image of sin. But it is nothing within. And therefore soothly though it be so that a chosen soul reformed in faith dwell in this body of sin, and feel the same fleshly stirrings and use the same bodily works as doth a tabernacle of cedar, so far forth that in man's doom there should be no difference betwixt that one and that other, nevertheless within their souls

* Cant. i 5.

there is a full great diversity and in the sight of God there is full much turning. But the knowing of this, which is one and which is the other, is only kept to God, for it passeth man's doom and man's feeling, and therefore we shall deem no man as evil for that thing that may be used both evil and well. A soul that is not reformed is taken so fully with the love of the world, and so much overlaid with the liking of his flesh in all his sensuality, that he chooseth it as a full rest of his heart; and in his privy meaning he would have naught else but that he might ever be secure thereof. He feeleth no liquor of grace stirring him to loathe his fleshly life, nor to desire heavenly bliss. And therefore I may say that he beareth not this image of sin but he is borne of it, as a man that were sick and so weak that he might not bear himself, and therefore he is laid in a bed and borne in a litter. Right so such a sinful soul is so weak and so unmighty for lacking of grace that he may neither move hand nor foot to do any good deed, nor to withstand, by displeasing of will, the least stirring of sin when it cometh, but he falleth down thereto as it were a beast upon carrion. But a soul that is reformed, though he use his fleshly wits and feel fleshly stirrings, nevertheless he loatheth them in his heart, for he would for nothing fully rest in them, but he fleeth the rest as the

biting of an adder, and had leifer have his rest and the love of his heart in God, if that he could, and sometimes desireth thereto, and often murmureth of the liking of this life for the love of the life everlasting. This soul is not borne in this image of sin as a sick man, though he feel it; but he beareth it. For through grace he is made mighty and strong to suffer and bear in his body with all the evil stirrings of it, without hurting or defiling of himself; and that is inasmuch as he loveth them not nor followeth them not, nor assenteth not to them the which are deadly sins, as another doth.

This was bodily fulfilled in the Gospel of a man that was in the palsy and was so feeble that he might not go, and therefore was he borne and laid in a litter and brought to our Lord. And when our Lord saw him in mischief, of His goodness He said to him: *Rise up and take thy bed and go into thy house.** And so he did and was whole. And soothly right as this man bore upon his back when he was made whole the bed that before bare him, right so it may be said ghostly that a soul reformed in faith beareth this image of sin the which bare him before. And therefore be not adread too much of thy blackness that thou hast of bearing of this image of sin. But as against the shame and the discomfort

* John v 8.

that thou hast of beholding of it, and also against upbraiding that thou feelest in thy heart of thy ghostly enemies, when they say to thee thus: Where is thy Lord Jesus? What seekest thou? Where is thy fairness that thou speakest of? What feelest thou aught but blindness of sin? Where is that image of God that thou sayest is reformed in thee? Comfort thyself and be faithful stiffly, as I have said before; and if thou do so, thou shalt by this troth destroy all the temptations of thine enemies. Thus saith the apostle Paul: *Take to thee a shield of steadfast troth, through the which thou mayest quench all the burning darts of thine enemy.**

CHAPTER XIII

OF THREE MANNER OF MEN, OF THE WHICH SOME BE NOT REFORMED, AND SOME BE REFORMED ONLY IN FAITH, AND SOME IN FAITH AND IN FEELING

By this that I have said mayest thou see that after divers parts of the soul are divers states of men. Some men are not reformed to the likeness of God, and some are reformed only in faith, and some are reformed in faith and in feeling. For thou shalt understand that a soul hath two parts. That one is

* Eph. vi 16.

called the sensuality, and that is fleshly feeling by the five outward wits, the which is common to man and beast. Of the which sensuality, when it is unskilfully and inordinately ruled, is made the image of sin, when it is not ruled after reason, for then is the sensuality sin. That other part is called reason, and that is departed in two, in the over part and in the nether. The over part is likened to a man, for it should be master and sovereign, and that is properly the image of God. For by that only the soul knoweth God and loveth Him. And the nether is likened to a woman, for it should be buxom to the other part of reason, as woman is buxom to man. And that lieth in knowing and ruling of earthly things, to use them discreetly after need and to refuse them when it is no need; for to have ever with it an eye open to the over part of reason, with dread and reverence to follow it. Now may I say that a soul that liveth after the likings and the lusts of his flesh, as it were an unskilful beast, and neither hath knowing of God nor desire to virtues nor to good living, but is all blinded in pride, fretted with envy, overlaid with covetousness, defiled with lechery and other great sin, is not reformed to the likeness of God in faith. For it lieth and resteth fully in the image of sin, that is the sensuality. Another soul that dreadeth God and with-

standeth deadly stirrings of the sensuality and followeth them not, but liveth skilfully in ruling and governance of worldly things and sets his intent and his will to please God by his outward works, is reformed to the likeness of God in faith. And though he feel the same stirrings of sin that that other doth, it shall not dis-ease him, for he resteth not in them as doth that other. But another soul that fleeth through grace all deadly stirrings of the sensuality and venials also, so far forth that he feeleth them not, is reformed in feeling. For he followeth the over part of reason in beholding of God and ghostly things, as I shall tell thee afterward.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW MEN THAT BE IN SIN FORSHAPE THEMSELVES INTO THE LIKENESS OF DIVERS BEASTS; AND HOW THEY BE CALLED THE LOVERS OF THE WORLD

A WRETCHED man is he then that knoweth not the worthiness of his soul nor will not know it; how it is the most worthy creature that ever God made—save only an angel whom it is like to—high above all other kind bodily, to the which nothing may suffice as full rest but only God. And therefore he should nothing love nor like but Him only,

nor covet nor seek but how he might be reformed to His likeness. But because he knoweth not this, therefore he seeketh and coveteth his rest and his liking outward in bodily creatures worse than himself is. Unkindly he doth, and unreasonably he worketh that leaveth the sovereign good and everlasting life that is God unsought, unloved, unknown and unworshipped, and chooseth his rest and his bliss in a passing delight of an earthly thing. Nevertheless, this do all the lovers of this world that have their joy and their bliss in this wretched life. Some have it in pride and vainglory of themselves, so that, when they have lost the dread of God, they travail and study night and day how they may come to worship and praising of the world, and make no force how it might be, so that they might come thereto and overpass all men either in clergy or in craft, in name or in fame, in riches or in reverence, in sovereignty and mastership, in high state and lordship. Some men have their rest in riches and in outrageous having of earthly good, and they set their hearts so fully to get it that they seek naught else but how they might come thereto. Some have their liking in fleshly lusts of gluttony and lechery, and in other bodily uncleanness, and some in one thing and some in another. And thus wretchedly these do that thus

forshape themselves from the worthiness of man, and turn themselves into divers beasts' likeness.

The proud man is turned into a lion for pride, for he would be dreaded and worshipped of all men, and that no man withstand the fulfilling of his fleshly will, neither in word nor in deed. And if any man would let his misproud will, he waxeth fell and wroth, and will be wreaked of him as a lion wreaketh him on a little beast. The man that doth this is no man, for he doth unreasonably to the kind of man, and so he is turned and transformed into a lion. Envious and angry men through wrath and envy are turned into hounds, so that they bark against their even-Christians and bite them by wicked and malicious words, and grieve them that have not trespassed with wrongful deeds, harming them in body and in soul against God's bidding. Some men are forshapen into asses that are slow to the service of God, and evil willed to do any good deed to their even-Christians. They are ready enough to run for worldly profit and for earthly worship, or for pleasure of an earthly man. But for ghostly meed and for help of their own souls, or for the worship of God, they are soon irked. They will naught thereof, and, if they do aught, they go but a pace and with froward will. Some

are turned into swine, for they are so blind in wit and so beastly in manners that they have no dread of God, but follow only the lusts and likings of their flesh, and have no regard to the honesty of man, nor rule themselves after the bidding of reason, nor refrain the unskilful stirrings of their fleshly kind, but as soon as a fleshly stirring cometh of sin, they are ready to fall thereto and follow as swine do. Some men are turned into wolves that live by ravening, as false covetous men do, that through mastery and overleading, rob their even-Christians of their worldly goods. Some men are turned into foxes, as false men and deceivable men that live in treachery and guile. All these and many other more that live not in dread of God but break His commandments, forshape themselves from the likeness of God and make them like to beasts, yea, and worse than beasts, for they are like to the fiend of hell. And therefore soothly these men that live thus, if they be not reformed when the hour of death cometh and their souls depart from their bodies, then shall their eye be opened that is now stopped with sin, and then shall they feel and find the pain of their wretchedness that they lived in here. And forasmuch as the image of God was not reformed through the sacrament of penance in them, neither in faith nor in feeling here

in this life, they shall be as cursed cast out from the blessed face of our Creator, and they shall be damned with the devil into the deepness of hell; there to be without end. Thus saith Saint John in the Apocalypse: *To proud men and to mistrowing men, to cursed and to manslayers, to lecherous and to covetous, to poisoners and to worshippers of idols, and to all false liars their dole* shall be with the devil in the pit of hell burning with fire and brimstone.*† If the lovers of this world would oft think on this, how all this world shall pass and draw to an end, and how all wicked love shall be hard punished, they should within short time loathe all worldly lusts that now they most like, and they should lift up their heart to love God, and they would busily seek and travail how they might be reformed to His likeness, ere that they pass hence.

CHAPTER XV

HOW LOVERS OF THIS WORLD UNABLE THEM IN DIVERS MANNERS TO THE REFORMING OF THEIR OWN SOUL

But now say some of them thus: "I would fain love God and be a good man and forsake the love of the world if I might, but I have no grace thereto. If I had the same grace

* Dole—*i.e.*, pain, punishment.
† Apoc. xxi 8.

that a good man hath, I should do as he doth; but because I have it not, therefore I may not, and so it is not to me to wit, but I am excused." Unto these men I say thus: Sooth it is as they say that they have no grace, and therefore they lie still in their sin and may not rise out. But that availeth them not against God, for it is their own default. They unable them by divers ways so much that the light of grace may not shine in them nor rest in their hearts. For some men are so froward that they will not have grace, nor will they be good men. For they wit well that if they should be good men, they must needs forbear the great liking and lust of this world that they have in earthly things; and that they will not. For they think it is so sweet that they will not forego it. And also they must needs take works of penance, as in fasting, waking, praying and doing many other good deeds, in chastising of their flesh and in withdrawing of their fleshly will, and that they may not do. For it is made so sharp and so dreadful to their thinking that they dread and loathe to think upon it, and so cowardly and wretchedly dwell they still in their sin.

Some would have grace as it seemeth, and begin to able them thereto, but their will is wondrous weak. For as soon as any stirring of sin cometh, though it be contrary to the

bidding of God, they fall anon thereto, for they are so bound through custom by oft falling and oft assenting to sin before, that they think it impossible for them to withstand it, and so the feigned hardness of performing weakeneth their will and smiteth it down again. Some also feel stirrings of grace, as when they have biting of conscience for their evil living, to the end that they should leave it. But that is so painful to them and heavy, that they will not suffer it nor abide it, but they flee therefrom and forget it if they may; so far forth that they seek liking and comfort outward in fleshly creatures, so that they should not feel this biting of conscience within their soul. And moreover some men are so blind and so beastly that they ween that there is none other life but this, nor that there is no soul other than of a beast, and that the soul of a man dieth with the body as the soul of a beast. And therefore they say, Eat we, drink we, and make we merry here, for of this life we are secure: we see none other heaven. Soothly such are some wretches that say thus in their heart, though they say it not with their mouth. Of the which men the prophet saith thus: *The unwise man said in his heart, there is no God.**

This unwise man is every wretched man

* Ps. xiii 1.

that liveth, and loveth sin and chooseth the love of this world as rest of his soul. He saith there is no God; not with his mouth, for he will speak of Him sometime when he fareth well fleshly, as it were in reverence, when he saith, Blessed be God; sometime in despite when he is angry against God or his even-Christian, and sweareth by His blessed body or any of His members. But he saith in his thought that there is no God, and that is either because he weeneth that God seeth not his sin, or that He will not punish it so hard as Holy Writ saith, or that He will forgive him the sin though he leave it not, or else that no Christian man shall be damned do he never so evil, or else if he fast our Lady's fast, or say every day a certain orison, or hear every day two masses or three, or do a certain bodily deed as it were in worship of God, he shall never go to hell, do he never so much sin, though he forsake it not. This man *saith in his heart, There is no God.* But he is unwise as the prophet saith. For he shall feel and find in pain that He is God whom he forgat and set naught by, but set him by the weal of this world, as the prophet saith: *Only pain shall give understanding.** For he that knoweth not this here, nor will not know, shall well know it when he is in pain.

* Isa. xxviii 19.

CHAPTER XVI

A LITTLE COUNSEL HOW LOVERS OF THIS WORLD SHOULD DO, IF THEY WOULD BE REFORMED IN THEIR SOUL BEFORE THEIR PARTING HENCE

THESE men, though they wit well that they are out of grace and in deadly sin, have no care nor sorrow nor thought therefore. But they make fleshly mirth and worldly solace as much as they may, and the further they be from grace the more mirth they make. And perchance some hold them well paid that they have no grace, that they may, as it were, the more freely and fully follow the liking of fleshly lusts; as though God were asleep and might not see them. And this is one of the most defaults that may be. And thus by their own frowardness they stop the light of grace from their own soul that it may not rest therein; the which grace, as much as in it is, shineth to all ghostly creatures, ready to enter in where it is received, as the sun shineth over all creatures bodily where it is not letted. Thus saith Saint John in the Gospel: *The light* of grace *shineth in darkness*, that is to men's hearts that are dark through sin; *but the darkness taketh it not.** That is,

* John i 5.

these blind hearts receive not the gracious light nor have not the profit of it. But right as a blind man is all belapped with the light of the sun when he standeth therein, and yet feeleth he it not, nor hath no profit thereof to go thereby, right so ghostly a soul blinded with deadly sin is all belapped with this ghostly light, and yet he is never the better, for he is blind and will not see nor know his blindness. And that is one of the most lettings of grace, that a wretched man will not acknowledge his own blindness for pride of himself, or else if he know it, he chargeth it not but maketh mirth and game as he were over all secure.

Therefore unto all these men that are blinded and bounded with the love of this world and are foul forshapen from the fairness of man, I say and counsel that they think on their soul, and that they able them unto grace as much as they may. And that may they do upon this wise, if they will. When they feel themselves out of grace and overlaid with deadly sin, that they then think what peril and what mischief it is to them to be put out of grace and departed from God as they be; for there is nothing that holdeth them from the pit of hell that they should not right soon fall therein, but a bare single thread of this bodily life whereby they hang. What lightlier may be lost than a single

thread may be broken in two? For when the breath stoppeth in their body—and that may lightly befall—their soul shall pass forth and anon be in hell without end. And if they would think thus, they should quake and shake for dread of the rightful dooms of God and of the hard punishing of sin; and they should make sorrow and mourn for their sin and for lacking of grace, and then should they cry and pray that they might have grace. And if they did thus, then should grace fall in and put out darkness and hardness of heart and wickedness of will, and give them might and strength to forsake the false love of this world as much as is deadly sin. For there is no soul so far from God through wickedness of will in deadly sin, that he may not through grace be righted and reformed to cleanness of living, if he will bow his will to God with meekness to amend his life, and heartily ask grace and forgiveness of Him, and excuse our Lord and fully accuse himself. For Holy Writ, that is our Lord, saith: *I will not the death of a sinner, but I will more that he be turned to Me and live.** For our Lord wills that the most froward man that liveth forshapen through sin, if he turn his will and ask grace, that he be reformed to His likeness.

* Ezech. xxxiii 11.

CHAPTER XVII

THAT REFORMING IN FAITH AND IN FEELING MAY NOT SUDDENLY BE GOTTEN, BUT BY GRACE AND MUCH BODILY AND GHOSTLY TRAVAIL IN LENGTH OF TIME

THIS reforming is in faith, as I have before said, that lightly may be had. But after this cometh reforming in faith and in feeling, that may not lightly be gotten, but through long travail and much business. For reforming in faith is common to all chosen souls, though they be in the lowest degree of charity. But reforming in feeling is specially of those souls that may come to the state of perfection, and that may not suddenly be had. But after great plenty of grace and much ghostly travail a soul may come thereto; and that is when he is first helped of his ghostly sickness, and when all bitter passion and fleshly lusts and other old feelings are burnt out of the heart with fire of desire, and other new gracious feelings are brought in with burning love and ghostly light. Then right nigh nigheth a soul to perfection and to reforming in feeling.

For sooth it is, right as a man is brought nigh to death through bodily sickness, though he receive a medicine by which he is

restored and secure of his life, he may not therefore at once rise up and go to work as an whole man may; for the feebleness of his body holdeth him down, that he must abide a good while and keep him well with medicines, and diet him by measure after the teaching of a leech, till he may fully recover bodily health. Right so ghostly he that is brought to ghostly death through deadly sin, though he through medicine of the sacrament of penance be restored to life that he shall not be damned, nevertheless he is not anon whole of all his passions and of all his fleshly desires, nor able to contemplation. But it behoveth him to abide a great while and take good keep of himself, and rule him so that he might recover full health of soul, for he shall languor a great while ere that he be fully whole. Nevertheless if he take medicines of a good leech, and use them in time with measure and discretion, he shall much the sooner be restored to his ghostly strength, and come to reforming in feeling. For reforming in faith is the lowest state of all chosen souls, for beneath that they might not well be; but reforming in feeling is the highest state in this life that the soul may come to. But from the lowest to the highest a soul may not suddenly start, no more than a man that will climb upon a ladder high and setteth his foot upon the lowest rung may

at the next fly up to the highest; but it behoveth him to go by process one after another till he may come to the topmost. Right so is it ghostly; no man is made suddenly sovereign in grace, but through long exercise and sly working a soul may come thereto, namely when He helpeth and teacheth a wretched soul in whom all grace lieth. For without special help and inwardly teaching of Him may no soul come thereto.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CAUSE WHY SO FEW SOULS, COMPARED WITH THE MULTITUDE OF THE OTHERS, COME TO THIS REFORMING IN FAITH AND IN FEELING

But now sayest thou, since our Lord is so courteous of His goodness, and of His gracious gifts so free, wonder it is then that so few souls, as it seemeth in regard of the multitude of others, may come to this reforming in feeling. It seemeth that He were estranged, and that is not sooth; or that He took no regard of His creatures, the which by taking of faith are become His servants. Unto this I may answer and say as methinketh that one reason is this. Many that are reformed in faith set not their hearts to profit in grace nor to seek none higher

estate of good living, through busy travail in praying and thinking and other bodily and ghostly working; but they think it enough for them to keep themselves out of deadly sin, and to stand still in that plight that they are in. For they say that it is enough for them to be saved and have the least degree in heaven; they will covet no more.

Thus perchance do some of the chosen souls that in the world lead active lives; and that is little wonder of them. For they are so occupied in worldly business that needeth to be done, that they may not fully set their hearts to profit in ghostly working. And nevertheless it is perilous to them, for they fall out and in all day, and are now up now down, and may not come to the stableness of good living. But other men and women that are free from worldly business if they will, and may have their needful sustenance without great bodily business—as religious men and women specially may that bind themselves to the state of perfection by taking of religion, and other men also in secular state that have much reason in great kindly wit, and might if they would dispose them to come to much grace—these men are more to blame, for they stand still as they were idle and will not profit in grace, nor no further seek to come to the love and the knowing of God.

For soothly it is perilous to a soul that is reformed only in faith, and will no more seek profit nor give him busily to ghostly travail: for so he may lightly lose that which he hath, and fall again to deadly sin. For a soul while it is in the flesh may not stand still alway in one state; for it is either profiting in grace or pairing* in sin. For it fareth by him as it doth by a man that were drawn out of a pit, who when he were up would no further go than the pit's brink. Soothly he were a much fool, for a little puff of wind or an inwardly stirring of himself should soon cast him down again worse than he was before. Nevertheless if he flee from the brink as far as he may and go forth on the earth, then though there come a great storm he is the more secure, for he falleth not in the pit. Right so ghostly is he that is drawn out of the pit of sin through reforming of faith, who when he is out of deadly sin thinketh himself secure enough, and therefore will not profit but hold him still as he is by the pit's brink as near as he may. Soothly he is not wise; for at the least temptation of the enemy or of his flesh he falleth into sin again. But nevertheless if he flee from the pit, that is if he set his heart fully to come to more grace and to travail busily how he may come

* Profiting—*i.e.*, progressing; pairing—*i.e.*, becoming worse, *cf.* impair.

thereto, and give him heartily to praying, thinking, and doing other good works, though great temptations rise against him, he falleth not lightly to deadly sin again.

And soothly it is wonder to me, that since grace is so good and profitable, why a man when he hath but a little thereof—yea so little that he might scarce have less—will say, "Hold! I will no more of this, for I have enough." When I see a worldly man, though he have of worldly goods much more than he needeth, yet he will never say, "Hold! I have enough, I will no more of this." But he will covet more and more, and travail with all his wits and his mights, and never will stint of his covetousness till he may have no more. Much more then should a chosen soul covet ghostly good that is everlasting and maketh a soul blessed. And he never should cease of his coveting if he did well, get what he might. For he that most coveteth most shall have; and soothly if he did thus, he should profit and wax in grace greatly.

CHAPTER XIX

ANOTHER CAUSE ALSO OF THE SAME. AND HOW WILFUL BODILY CUSTOMS INDISCREETLY REGARDED AND USED, SOMETIMES HINDER SOULS FROM FEELING OF MORE GRACE

ANOTHER reason is this. Some men that are reformed in faith at the beginning of their turning to God, set themselves in a certain manner of doing, whether it be bodily or ghostly, and think ever to keep that manner of working forth, and not to change it for none other through grace, though it were better. For they ween that that doing should be best for them always to hold; and therefore they rest them therein, and through custom they bind them so thereto, that when they have fulfilled it they think them wonderly eased, for they ween that they have done a great thing for God. And perchance if it fall that they be letted from their custom, though it be for a skilful cause, they be heavy and angry and have troubling of conscience, as if they had done a great deadly sin. These men hinder themselves somewhat from feeling of more grace, for they set their perfection in a bodily work, and so they make an end in the midst of the way, where none end is.

For why, bodily customs that men use in the beginning are good, but they are but means and ways leading a soul to perfection; and therefore he that setteth his perfection in a bodily work or in a ghostly work that he feeleth in the beginning of his turning to God, and will no further seek but ever rest therein, he hindereth himself greatly. For that is a simple craft wherein a prentice is ever alike wise, who can on the first day as much of it as he can thirty winters after; or else if the craft be good and subtle, he is of a dull wit or else of an evil will that profiteth not therein. But then it is sooth that of all crafts that are, the service of God is the most sovereign and the most subtle, the highest and hardest to come to the perfection of it; and also it is the most profitable and most of winning to him that may soothfastly perform it. And therefore it seemeth that the prentices of it that are ever alike far forth in learning, either they are dull-witted or else evil-willed. I reprove not these customs that men use in the state of beginning, whether they be bodily or ghostly, for I say that they are full good and speedful for them to use. But I would that they held them not but as a way and an entry towards ghostly feeling, and that they used them as a convenable means till better come, and that in using of them they coveted after better.

And then if better come that were more ghostly and that draweth more the thought from fleshliness and from sensuality and vain imagination, if that should be letted because of their customs, then let them leave their custom, when it may be left without slander* or dis-ease of other men, and follow that they feel. But if neither custom let the other, then shall they use both if they may. I mean not of customs needful through bond of law, or of rule, or of penance, but other custom wilfully taken. Thus teacheth us the prophet in the psalter: *Soothly the bringer of the law shall give blessing, and they shall go from virtue unto virtue, and God of Gods shall be seen in Sion.*† The bringer of the law, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, shall give His blessing; that is, He shall give His grace to His chosen souls, calling them from sin and righting them by good works to His likeness; through which grace they shall profit and wax from virtue to virtue till they come to Sion, that is till they come to contemplation, in the which they shall see God of Gods, that is, they shall see that there is naught but one God.

* Slander—*i.e.*, scandal.
† Ps. lxxxiii 8.

CHAPTER XX

HOW WITHOUT MUCH BODILY AND GHOSTLY BUSINESS, AND WITHOUT MUCH GRACE AND MEEKNESS, SOULS MAY NOT BE REFORMED IN FEELING, NOR KEEP THEREIN AFTER THEY ARE COME THERETO

Now sayest thou, since it is so that reforming in faith is so low and so perilous to rest in, because of dread of falling again, and reforming in feeling is so high and so secure, whoso might come thereto: then covetest thou to wit what manner of travail were most speedful to use by which a man might profit and come thereto, or if there were any certain travail or special deed by which a man might come to that grace and that reforming in feeling. As unto this I say thus: thou wottest well that what man or woman will dispose him to come to cleanness of heart and to feeling of grace, it behoveth him to have much travail and great fighting in will and in work lastingly against wicked stirrings of all the capital sins. Not only against pride or envy, but against all others, with all the species that come out of them, as I have said before in the first writing. For why, passions and fleshly desires let the cleanness of the heart and peace in conscience. And

it behoveth him also to travail to get all virtues; not only chastity and abstinence, but also patience and mildness, charity and meekness, and all the others. And this may not be done by one manner of work, but by divers works and many, after sundry dispositions of men. As now praying, now thinking, now working some good works, now assaying themselves in divers wise; in hunger, in thirst, in cold, in suffering of shame and despite if need be, and in other bodily dis-ease for love of virtue and soothfastness. This knowest thou well, for this thou readest in every book that teacheth of good living. Thus saith every man that will stir men's souls to the love of God. And so it seemeth that there is no special travail nor certain deed through which a soul might come to that grace; but principally through grace of our Lord Jesus, and by many deeds and great in all that he may do, and yet all is little enough.

And one reason may be this: for since our Lord Jesus Himself is special master of this craft, and He is special leech of ghostly sickness, for without Him all is naught, it is therefore reasonable that after what He teacheth and stirreth, so a man follow and work. But he is a simple master that cannot teach his disciple while he is in learning but one lesson alway, and he is an unwise leech

that ever by one medicine will heal all sores. Therefore our Lord Jesus, that is so wise and so good, to show His wisdom and His goodness, teacheth divers lessons to His disciples, after that they profit in their learning, and giveth to divers souls divers medicines after the feeling of their sickness. Also another skill is this: if there were any one certain deed by which a soul might come to the perfect love of God, then should a man ween that he might come thereto by his own work and through his own travail, as a merchant cometh to his meed by his own travail only, and by his own work. Nay, it is not so ghostly in the love of God. For he that will serve God wisely and come to the perfect love of God, he shall covet to have none other meed but Him only. But then to have Him may no creature deserve only by his own travail. For though a man might travail as much bodily and ghostly as all creatures might that ever were, he might not deserve only by his works to have God to his meed; for He is sovereign bliss and endless goodness, and passeth without comparison all men's deserts, and therefore He may not be got by no man's special works, as bodily meed may. For He is free, and giveth Himself where He will and when He will, neither for this work nor for that, nor in this time nor after this time. For though

a soul work all that he can and may all his lifetime, perfect love of Jesus shall he never have, till our Lord Jesus will freely give it. Nevertheless on that other side I say also, I think that He giveth it not unless a man travail all that he can and may, yea till he thinketh that he may no more; or else be in full will thereto if he might. And so it seemeth that neither grace only without full working of a soul that in it is, nor working alone without grace, bringeth a soul to reforming in feeling, which reforming standeth in perfect love and charity. But the one joined to the other, that is grace joined to working, bringeth into a soul the blessed feeling of perfect love; the which grace may not rest fully but on meek souls that be full of the dread of God. Therefore may I say, he that hath no meekness nor doth his business may not come to this reforming in feeling. He hath not full meekness that cannot feel of himself soothfastly as he is; as thus, he that doth all the good deeds that he can, as in fasting, waking, wearing of the hair, and all other suffering of bodily penance, or doth all the outward works of mercy to his even-Christian, or else inward, as praying, weeping, sighing, and thinking: if he rest ever in them and lean so much to them, and regardeth them so greatly in his own sight that he presumeth of his own deserts, and

thinketh himself ever rich and good, holy and virtuous; soothly as long as he feeleth thus, he is not meek enough. Nor though he say or think that all that he doth is of God's gift and not of himself, he is not yet meek enough; for he may not make himself yet naked of all his good deeds, nor make himself poor soothfastly in spirit, nor feel himself naught as he is. And soothly until a soul feelably through grace can naught himself and bare him from all the good deeds that he doth through beholding of the soothfastness of Jesus, he is not perfectly meek. For what is meekness but soothfastness? Soothly naught else. And therefore he that through grace may see Jesus, how that He doth all, and himself doth right naught but suffereth Jesus to work in him what He liketh, he is meek. But this is full hard and as it were impossible and unreasonable to a man that worketh all by man's reason, and seeth no further to do many good deeds, and then to arrette* all to Jesus, and set himself at naught. Nevertheless whoso might have a ghostly sight of soothfastness, he should think it full true and full reasonable for to do so. And soothly he that hath this sight shall never do the less, but he shall be stirred to travail bodily and ghostly much the more and with the better will. And this may be

* Arrette—*i.e.*, account.

one cause why some men peradventure swink and sweat and pine their wretched body with outrageous penance all their lifetime, and are ever saying orisons and psalters and many other beads, and yet they may not come to the ghostly feeling of the love of God—as it seemeth some do in short time with less pain—for they have not that meekness that I speak of. Also on the other side I say, he that doth not his business may not come to the feeling of grace. He doth not his business that thinketh thus: Whereto should I travail? Whereto should I pray or think, wake or fast, or do any other bodily penance to come to such grace, since it may not be gotten nor had except of the free gift of Jesus? Therefore I will abide in fleshliness as I am, and right naught do of such works bodily nor ghostly until He give it. For if He will give it He asketh no working of me. Whatso that I do, and how little I do, I shall have it. And if He will not give it, travail I never so fast therefore, I get it never the sooner. He that sayeth thus may not come to this reforming, for he draweth himself wilfully to idleness of the fleshhead, and unableth him to the gift of grace; inasmuch as he putteth from him both inward working that standeth in lasting desire and in longing to Jesus, and outward working by travail of his body in outward deeds. So may

he not have it. Therefore I say that he that hath not true meekness nor full hearty business; either inward only by great fervour and lasting desire and busy prayer and thought in God, or else both inward and outward, he may not come to this ghostly reforming of his image.

CHAPTER XXI

AN ENTRY HOW A SOUL THAT WILL COME TO THIS REFORMING SHALL HAVE HER IN MEANING AND WORKING, BY EXAMPLE OF A PILGRIM GOING TO JERUSALEM; AND OF TWO MANNER OF MEEKNESS

NEVERTHELESS for thou covetest to have some manner working by which thou mightest be rather nigh to that reforming, I shall say thee as methinketh by the grace of our Lord Jesus, the shortest and readiest help that I know in this working. And how that shall be, I shall tell thee by an example of a good pilgrim upon this wise.

There was a man that would go to Jerusalem, and because he knew not the way he came to another man that he hoped knew better the way thither, and asked whether he might come to that city. That other man said to him that he might not come thither without great dis-ease and much travail,

because the way is long and perilous and full of great thieves and robbers, and many other lettings there be that fall to a man in the going. And also there are many several ways as it seemeth leading thitherward; but men all day are slain and despoiled and may not come to that place that they covet. Nevertheless there is one way which, whoso taketh it and holdeth it, he would undertake that he should come to the city of Jerusalem, and he should never lose his life nor be slain, nor die for default. He should often be robbed and evil beaten and suffer much dis-ease in the going, but his life should be safe. Then said the pilgrim: So that I may have my life safe and come to that place that I covet, I charge not what mischief I suffer in going; and therefore say me what thou wilt, and soothly I behote* to do after thee. That other man answereth and saith thus: Lo, I set thee in the right way. This is the way, and that thou keep the learning that I teach thee. Whatsoever thou hearest, seest or feelest, that should let thee in the way, abide not with it wilfully, tarry not for it restfully, behold it not, like it not, dread it not; but ever go forth in thy way, and think thou wouldest be at Jerusalem. For that thou covetest, and that thou desirest, and naught else but that. And if men rob thee

* Behote—*i.e.*, promise.

and despoil thee, beat thee, scorn thee, despise thee, strive not again if thou wilt have thy life, but hold thee with the harm that thou hast and go forth as if naught were, that thou take no more harm. And also if men would tarry thee with tales and feed thee with leasings, to draw thee to mirths and to leave thy pilgrimage, make a deaf ear and answer not again, and say naught else but that thou wouldest be at Jerusalem. And if men proffer thee gifts and will make thee rich with worldly good, attend not to them; think ever on Jerusalem. And if thou wilt hold this way and do that I have said, I undertake thy life that thou shalt not be slain, but thou shalt come to that place that thou covetest.

Ghostly to our purpose, Jerusalem is as much as to say a sight of peace, and betokeneth contemplation in perfect love of God. For contemplation is naught else but a sight of God, which is very peace. Then if thou covet to come to this blessed sight of very peace and be a true pilgrim to Jerusalem-ward, though it be so that I were never there, nevertheless as far forth as I can I shall set thee in the way thitherward. The beginning of the high way in the which thou shalt go is reforming in faith, grounded meekly in the faith and in the laws of Holy Church, as I have said before; for trust

securely, that though thou have sinned herebefore, if thou be now reformed by the sacrament of penance after the law of Holy Church, thou art in the right way. Now then, since thou art in the secure way, if thou wilt speed in thy going and make good journeys, it behoveth thee to hold these two things often in thy mind: meekness and love. And that is; I am naught, I have naught, I covet naught, but one. Thou shalt have the meaning of these words in thine intent and in habit of thy soul lastingly, though thou have them not specially in thy thought, for that needeth not. Meekness saith, I am naught, I have naught. Love saith, I covet naught but one, and that is Jesus. These two strings, well fastened with the mind of Jesus, make good accord in the harp of the soul, when they be craftily touched with the finger of reason; for the lower thou smitest upon the one, the higher soundeth the other. The less thou feelest that thou art or that thou hast of thyself through meekness, the more thou covetest to have of Jesus in desire of love. I mean not only of that meekness that a soul feeleth in the sight of his own sin, for frailness and wretchedness of this life, or of the worthiness of his even-Christian. For though this meekness be soothfast and medicinable, nevertheless it is boisterous and fleshly as in regard, not clean nor soft nor

lovely. But I mean also this meekness that the soul feeleth through grace, in sight and beholding of the endless being and the wonderful goodness of Jesus. And if thou may not see it yet with thy ghostly eye, that thou trow it. For through sight of His being, either in full faith or in feeling, thou shalt hold thyself not only the most wretch that is, but also as naught in substance of thy soul, though thou hadst never done sin. And that is lovely meekness; for in regard of Jesus that is soothfastly all, thou art right naught. And also that thou think that thou hast right naught, but art as a vessel that standeth ever empty as if naught were therein, as of thyself. For do thou never so many good deeds outward or inward, till thou have and feel that thou hast the love of Jesus, thou has right naught. For with that precious liquor only, may thy soul be fulfilled, and with none other. And forasmuch as that thing alone is so precious and so worthy, therefore what thou hast or what thou dost, hold it as naught to rest in, without the sight of the love of Jesus. Cast it all behind thee and forget it, that thou mightest have that that is best of all. Right as a true pilgrim going to Jerusalem leaveth behind him house and land, wife and child, and maketh himself poor and bare from all that he hath, that he might go lightly without

letting: right so if thou wilt be a ghostly pilgrim, thou shalt make thyself naked from all that thou hast, that are both good deeds and bad, and cast them all behind thee, that thou be so poor in thine own feeling that there is nothing of thine own working that thou wilt lean upon restingly, but ever desiring more grace and love, and ever seeking the ghostly presence of Jesus. And if thou do thus, then shalt thou set in thine heart fully that thou wouldst be at Jerusalem and at none other place but there. And that is, thou shalt set in thine heart wholly and fully that thou wouldest nothing have but the love of Jesus, and the ghostly sight of Him as He will show Him; for to that only art thou made and bought, and that is thy beginning and thine ending, thy joy and thy bliss. And therefore whatsoever thou have, be thou never so rich in other deeds bodily and ghostly, unless thou have that, and know and feel that thou hast it, hold that thou hast right naught. Print well this reason in the meaning of thy heart, and cleave sadly thereto; and it shall save thee from all perils in thy going, that thou shalt never perish, and it shall save thee from thieves and robbers, the which I call unclean spirits, that though they spoil thee and beat thee through divers temptations, thy life shall ever be safe. And shortly if thou keep it as I shall tell thee,

thou shalt escape all perils and mischiefs and come to the city of Jerusalem within short time.

Now thou art in the way and knowest what the place is called whither thou shalt draw to. Begin then to go in thy journey. Thy forthgoing is naught else but ghostly working, and bodily also when need is; which thou shalt use by discretion upon this wise. What work that it be that thou shalt do after the degree and the state that thou standest in bodily or ghostly, if it help this gracious desire that thou hast to love Jesus, and make it more easy, more whole and more mighty to all virtues and to all goodness, that work hold I best; be it preaching, be it thinking, be it reading, be it working. And as long as that work strengtheneth most thy heart and thy will to the love of Jesus, and furthest draweth thine affection and thy thought from worldly vanity, it is good to use it. And if it be so that, through use, the savour of that work letteth, and thou thinkest that another work savoureth thee more, and thou feelest more grace in another, take another and leave that. For though thy desire and the yearning of thine heart to Jesus should be ever unchangeable, nevertheless thy ghostly works, that thou shalt use in praying or thinking to feed and nourish thy desire, may be divers, and may well be changed after that thou feelest thee disposed

through grace in applying of thine own heart. For it fareth by works and by desire as it doth by sticks and by a fire. For the more sticks are laid to the fire, the greater is the fire; right so the more divers ghostly working that a man hath in his thought to keep whole his desire, the mightier and more burning shall his desire be to God. And therefore look wisely what work thou canst best do, and that most helpeth thee to save whole this desire to Jesus, if thou be free, and art not bound save by the common law; and do that. Bind thee not to wilful customs unchangeably, that should let the freedom of thine heart to love Jesus if grace would visit thee specially. For I shall tell thee which customs are ever good and needful to be kept. Lo, such custom is ever good to hold that standeth in getting of virtue and letting of sin, and that custom should never be left, for thou shalt ever be meek, patient, sober and chaste if thou do well, and so of all other virtues. But the custom of another thing that letteth a better, it is good to leave when time is, where a man may. As thus, if a man have in custom to say thus-many beads, or to think this manner of thought this long time, or to wake or kneel thus long, or any other such bodily deed, this custom he may leave sometimes when reasonable cause letteth, or else if more grace come otherwise.

CHAPTER XXII

OF TARRYINGS AND TEMPTATIONS BY THEIR GHOSTLY ENEMIES THAT SOULS FEEL IN THEIR GHOSTLY KNOWING AND GOING TO JERUSALEM; AND OF REMEDIES AGAINST THEM

Now thou art in the way, and wottest how thou shalt go. Now beware of enemies that will be busy to let thee if they may. For their intent is to put out of thine heart that desire and the longing that thou hast to the love of Jesus, and to drive thee home again to the love of worldy vanities, for there is nothing that grieveth them so much. These enemies are principally fleshly desires and vain dreads, that rise out of thy heart through corruption of thy fleshly kind, and would let thy desire of the love of God, that they might fully and restfully occupy thine heart; these are thy next enemies. Also other enemies there be, as unclean spirits that are busy with sleights and wiles to deceive thee. But one remedy shalt thou have that I said before; what so ever it be that they say, trow them not, but hold forth thy way, and only desire the love of Jesus. Answer ever thus: I am naught, I have naught, I covet naught, but only the love of Jesus. If thine enemies say to thee first thus, by stirrings in heart that

thou art not shriven aright, or that there is some old sin hid in thy heart that thou knowest not, nor never were shriven aright, and therefore thou must turn home again and leave thy desire, and go shrive thee better: trow not this saying, for it is false, for thou art shriven. Trust securely that thou art in the way, and needest no more ransacking of shrift for that which is past. Hold forth thy way and think on Jerusalem. Also if they say that thou art not worthy to have the love of God, whereto shalt thou covet that thou might not have, nor art not worthy thereto; trow them not but go forth and say thus: "Not because I am worthy, but because I am unworthy, therefore would I love God; for, if I had it, that should make me worthy. And since I was made thereto, though I should never have it, yet will I covet it, and therefore will I pray and think that I might get it." And then if thine enemies see that thou beginnest to wax bold and well willed to thy work, they begin to wax afraid of thee. Nevertheless they will not cease of tarrying thee whenever they may, as long as thou art going in the way, what with dread and menacing on the one side, what with flattering and false pleasing on the other side, to make thee break thy purpose and turn home again. They will say thus: If thou hold forth thy desire to

Jesus so fully travailing as thou beginnest, thou shalt fall into sickness or into fantasies, or into frenzies, as thou seest that some do; or thou shalt fall into poverty and bodily mischief, and no man shall well help thee; or thou might fall into privy temptations of the fiend, that thou shalt not help thyself. For it is wonder perilous to any man to give him fully to the love of God, and leave all the world, and covet nothing but only the love of Him; for so many perils may befall that a man knoweth not of. And therefore turn home again and leave this desire, for thou shalt never bring it to the end; and do as other worldly men do.

Thus say thine enemies, but trow them not, but hold forth thy desire, and say naught else but thou wouldest have Jesus, and be at Jerusalem. And if they perceive then thy will so strong that thou wilt not spare neither for sin nor for sickness, for fantasies nor for frenzies, for doubts nor for dreads of ghostly temptations, for mischief nor for poverty, for life nor for death; but ever forth thou wilt one thing and nothing but one, and makest deaf ear to them as though thou heard them not, and holdest thee forth stiffly in thy prayer and in thy other ghostly works without stinting, with discretion after counsel of thy sovereign* or of thy ghostly

* Sovereign—*i.e.*, superior.

father, then begin they to be wroth and go a little nearer thee. Then they begin to rob thee and beat thee, and do thee all the shame that they can. And that is when they bring it to pass that all the deeds that thou dost, be they never so well done, are deemed of other men as ill and turned into the worst part. And whatsoever it be that thou wouldest have done in help of thy body or of thy soul, it shall be letted or hindered by other men; so that thou shalt be put from thy will in all things that thou skilfully covetest. And all this they do that thou shouldest be stirred to ire or melancholy or evil will against thy even-Christian. But against all these dis-eases, and all other that thou mayest feel, use this remedy. Take Jesus in thy mind and anger thee not with them, tarry not with them but think on thy lesson, that thou art naught, that thou hast naught, that thou mayest naught lose of earthly good, thou covetest naught but the love of Jesus, and hold forth thy way to Jerusalem with thy occupation. And nevertheless if thou be tarried sometime through frailty of thyself with such uneases as fall to thy bodily life, through evil will of man or malice of the fiend, as soon as thou mayest come again to thyself, leave off the thinking of thy dis-ease and go forth to thy work. Abide not too long with them for dread of thine enemies.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF A GENERAL REMEDY AGAINST WICKED STIRRINGS AND PAINFUL TARRYINGS THAT FALL TO THEIR HEARTS, OF THE FLESH, OF THE WORLD, AND OF THE FIEND

And after this, when thine enemies see that thou art so well willed, that thou art not angry nor heavy, nor wroth, nor much stirred against any creature for aught that they may do or speak against thee; but settest thy heart fully to suffer all that may befall, ease or unease, praise or lacking, and that thou wilt charge nothing with thee that thou mightest keep thy thought and thy desire whole to the love of God, then are they much abashed. But then will they assay thee with flattering and vain pleasing. And that is when they bring to the sight of thy soul all thy good deeds and virtues, and bear upon thee that all men praise thee and speak good of thy holiness and how all men love thee and worship thee for thy holy living. Thus do thine enemies that thou shouldest think their saying sooth, and have delight in this vain joy and rest thee therein. But if thou do well, thou shalt hold all such jangling as falsehood and flattery of thine enemy, that proffereth thee to drink venom tempered with

honey. And therefore refuse it and say thou wilt not thereof, but thou wouldest be at Jerusalem.

Such lettings thou shalt feel or else other like unto them, what of thy flesh, what of the world, what of the fiend, more than I may rehearse now. For a man as long as he suffereth his thought wilfully to run about the world in beholding of sundry things, he perceiveth few lettings, but as soon as he draweth all his thought and his yearning to one thing only, to have that, to know that, to love that, and that is only Jesus, then shall he well feel many painful lettings, for everything that he feeleth which is not that that he coveteth, is letting to him. Therefore I have told thee of some specially, as for example; and overmore I say generally that what stirring that thou feelest of thy flesh or of the fiend, pleasant or painful, bitter or sweet, liking or dreadful, gladsome or sorrowful, that would draw down thy thought and thy desire from the love of Jesus to worldly vanity, and would let utterly thy ghostly covetousness that thou hast to the love of Him, and that thy heart should be occupied with that stirring restingly, set it at naught, receive it not wilfully, tarry not therewith too long. But if it be of some worldly thing that behoveth needs to be done to thyself or to thine even-Christian, speed thee soon of

it and bring it to an end, that it hang not on thine heart. If it be another thing that needeth not, or else that toucheth thee not, charge it not, jangle not therewith, nor anger thee not, dread it not, like it not, but smite it out of thine heart readily, and say thus: "I am naught; I have naught; naught I seek nor covet but the love of Jesus." Knit thy thought to this desire, and strengthen it and maintain it with prayer and with other ghostly works that thou forget it not, and it shall lead thee in the right way and save thee from all perils, and though thou feel them thou shalt not perish, and I hope that it shall bring thee to perfect love of our Lord Jesus. Nevertheless on the other side I say also, what work or what stirring it may be that may help thy desire, and make thy thought furthest from lust and mind of the world, more whole and more burning to the love of God, strength it and nourish it; whether it be praying or thinking, stillness or speaking, reading or hearing, loneliness or communing, going or sitting; keep it for the time and work therein as long as the savour lasteth, if it so be that thou take therewith meat and drink and sleep as a pilgrim doth, and keep discretion in thy working after counsel and ordinance of thy sovereign. For have he never so great haste in his going, yet will he eat and drink and sleep. Do thou likewise.

For though it let thee one time, it shall further thee another time.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF AN EVIL DAY AND A GOOD NIGHT, AND WHAT IT MEANETH; AND HOW THE LOVE OF THE WORLD IS LIKENED TO AN EVIL DAY AND THE LOVE OF GOD TO A GOOD NIGHT

If thou wilt wit then what this desire is, soothly it is Jesus. For He maketh this desire in thee and He giveth it thee, and He it is that desireth in thee, and He it is that is desired. He is all and He doth all, if thou might see Him. Thou dost naught but sufferest Him to work in thy soul, and assentest to Him with great gladness of heart that He vouchsafeth so to do in thee. Thou art naught else but a reasonable instrument wherein that He worketh. And therefore when thou feelest thy thought by touching of His grace taketh up with desire to Jesus with a mighty devout will to please Him and love Him, then think that thou hast Jesus; for it is He that thou desirest. Behold Him well for He goeth before thee, not in bodily likeness but unseeably by privy presence of His might. Therefore see Him ghostly if thou may, and fasten all thy thought and thine affection to Him, and follow Him

wheresoever He goeth; for He shall lead thee the right way to Jerusalem that is the sight of peace in contemplation. Thus prayed the prophet to the Father of heaven, saying thus: Father of Heaven, *send out Thy light and Thy soothfastness*, that is Thy Son Jesus; *and He shall lead me* by desire in me *to Thy holy hill and to Thy tabernacles*,* that is to the feeling of perfect love and height in contemplation. Of this desire speaketh the prophet thus: Lord Jesus, *the mind of Thee is printed in desire of my soul, for my soul hath desired Thee in the night and my spirit hath coveted thee in all my thinkings*.† And why the prophet saith he hath desired God all in the night, and what he meaneth thereby, I shall tell thee. Thou wost that the night is a timeful space betwixt two days; for when one day is ended, another cometh not at once, but first cometh night and parteth the days, sometimes long and sometimes short, and then after cometh another day. The prophet meant not only this manner of night, but he meant a ghostly night. Thou shalt understand that there be two days or two lights; the first is a false light, the second is a true light. The false light is the love of this world that a man hath in himself of corruption of his flesh; the true light is the perfect love of Jesus felt through grace in a

* Ps. xlii 3. † Isa. xxvi 8, 9.

man's soul. The love of this world is a false light, for it passeth away and lasteth not, and so it performeth not what it promiseth. This light promised the fiend to Adam when he stirred him to sin and said: *Your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods.** And he said sooth, for when Adam had sinned, anon his inner eye was closed and ghostly light withdrawn, and his outer eyes were opened, and he felt and saw a new light of fleshly liking and worldly love that he saw not before. And so saw he a new day, but this was an evil day; for this was it that Job cursed when he said thus: *Perish the day in which I was born.*† He cursed not the day running in the year that God made, but he cursed this day that man made, that is the concupiscence and the love of this world in the which he was born, though he felt it not. Then this day and this light he asked of God that it should perish and no longer last.

But the everlasting love of Jesus is a true day and a blessed light. For God is both love and light, and He is everlasting as Saint John saith: *He that loveth God dwelleth in the light.*‡ Then when man perceiveth and seeth the love of this world false and failing, and for that he will forsake it and seek the love of Jesus, he may not at once feel the love

* Gen. iii 5. † Job iii 3.
‡ 1 John ii 10.

of Him, but he must abide awhile in the night, for he may not suddenly come from that one light to that other, that is from love of the world to perfect love of God. This night is naught else but a forbearing and a withdrawing of the thought of the soul from earthly things by great desire and yearning to love and see and feel Jesus and ghostly things. This is the night; for right as the night is dark and ever hiding from all bodily creatures and a resting from all bodily deeds, right so a man that setteth him fully to think on Jesus, and to desire only the love of Him, is busy to hide his thought from vain beholding and perceiving and his affection from fleshly liking and loving of all bodily creatures, so that his thought may be made free and not subject, nor his affection bound nor pained nor troubled in nothing lower or worse than himself. And if he may do so, then it is night with him, for then he is in darkness. But this is a good night and a light darkness, for it is a stopping out of the false love of this world, and it is a nighing to the true day. And soothly the darker that this night is, the nearer is the true day of the love of Jesus. For the more that a soul may, through longing to God, be hid from noise and din of fleshly affections and unclean thoughts, the nearer it is to feel the light of the love of Him, for it is even at it. Thus,

it seemeth, the prophet meant when he said: *When I sit in darkness our Lord is my light.** That is when my soul is hid from all stirrings of sin as it were in sleep, then is our Lord my light, for then nigheth He of His grace for to show me of His light. Nevertheless this night is sometimes painful, first when a man is much foul, and is not used through grace to be often in this darkness but would fain have it, and therefore he setteth his thought and his desire to Godward as much as he may, that he would not feel nor think but only of Him; and because he may not lightly have it, therefore it is painful. For the custom and the homeliness that he hath had with sins before, of the world and of fleshly affections and earthly things, and his fleshly deeds, press so upon him and ever smite in by mastery and draw down all the soul to them, that he may not well be hid from them as soon as he would. Therefore this darkness is painful to him, and namely when grace toucheth not abundantly. Nevertheless if it be so with thee, be not too heavy nor strive not much, as though thou wouldest through mastery put them out of thy thought; for thou mayest not do so. But abide grace, suffer easily, and break not thyself too much. And slyly if thou mayest, draw thy desire and thy ghostly beholding to

* Mic. vii 8.

Jesus if thou wouldst not charge them. For wit thou well, when thou wouldest desire Jesus and only think on Him, and thou mayest not freely for pressing in of such worldly thoughts, soothly thou art outward of the false day and thou art entering into this darkness; but thy darkness is not restful because of dis-ease and uncunning and uncleanness of thyself. And therefore use it oft, and it shall by process, through feeling of grace, be more easy and more restful to thee. And that is when thy soul through grace is made so free and so mighty and so good, and so gathered into itself that it list not to think on right naught: then is it in a good darkness. This naught I mean thus. That a soul may through grace be gathered into itself freely and wholly, and not be driven against the will nor drawn down by mastery to think or like or love with cleaving of affection to any sin, or vain or earthly thing. Then thinketh the soul right naught, for then thinketh it of none earthly thing cleavingly. This is a rich naught. And this naught and this night is a great ease for the soul that desireth the love of Jesus. It is in ease as for thought of any earthly thing, nevertheless it is full busy to think on him. What thing then maketh this darkness? Soothly naught else but a gracious desire to have the love of Jesus. For that desire and that longing that

it hath that time to the love of God, to see Him and have Him, driveth out of the heart all worldly vanities and fleshly affections and gathereth the soul into itself and occupieth it only to think how it might come to the love of Him. And that time may it freely and devoutly behold Jesus when it would pray or think, and so it bringeth it to this right naught, and soothly it is not all dark nor naught when it thinketh thus. For though it be dark from false light, it is not all dark from the true light; for Jesus, that is both love and light, is in this darkness, whether it be painful or restful. If it be painful, then He is in the soul as travailing in desire and longing to light; but He is not as yet resting in love nor as showing His light. And therefore it is called night and darkness, inasmuch as the soul is hid from the false light of the world and hath not yet fully feeling of true light, but is in abiding of that blessed love of God which it desireth. Then if thou wilt wit when thou art in this obscure darkness and when not, thou mayest assay thus and seek no further but thus. When thou feelest thine intent and thy will fully set to desire God and think only on Him, thou mayest as it were first ask thyself in thine own thought, whether thou covet to have anything of this life for love of itself, or to have the use of any of thy bodily wits in

any creature. And then if thine eye answer thee thus, I would see right naught; and thy mouth, I would savour right naught; and after thine ear, I would hear right naught; and thy body, I would feel right naught; and after if thy heart say, I would think right naught of earthly thing nor of bodily deed, nor would I have affection fastened to no earthly creature, but only in God and to Godward, if that I could: when they answer all thus to thee—and that is done full readily if grace touch thee—then art thou entered somewhat into this darkness. For though thou feel and perceive glintings and proffer-ings of vain thoughts and pressing in of fleshly affections, nevertheless thou art in this profitable darkness, if it be so that thy thought be not fixed in them. For such vain imaginations that fall in the heart unadvisedly trouble this darkness and pain the soul somewhat, because it would be hid from them and may not; but they do not away the profit of this darkness, for the soul shall by that way come to restful darkness. And then is this darkness restful, when the soul is hid for a time from the painful feeling of all such vain thought and only is rested in desire and longing to Jesus with a ghostly beholding to Him, as it shall be said afterward. But that lasteth but a while whole; nevertheless though it be but a short time, it is full profitable.

CHAPTER XXV

HOW THE DESIRE OF JESUS FELT IN THIS LIGHT-SOME DARKNESS SLAYETH ALL STIRRINGS OF SIN, AND ENABLETH THE SOUL TO PERCEIVE GHOSTLY LIGHTNINGS FROM THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM THAT IS JESUS

THEN since this darkness and this night is so good and so restful, though it be but short, that standeth only in desire and longing to the love of Jesus with a blind thinking on Him; how good then and how blessed is it to feel His love and to be illumined with His blessed unseeable present light to see soothfastness; the which light a soul receiveth when the night passeth and the day springeth. This I think was the night that the prophet meant when he said: *My soul hath desired Thee in the night.** As I have before said it is much better to be hid in this dark night from beholding of the world, though it is more painful, than to be out in false liking of this world, that seemeth so shining and so comfortable to them that are blind in knowing of ghostly light. For when thou art in this darkness thou art much nearer Jerusalem than when thou art in the midst of the false light. Therefore apply thine heart fully to

* Isa. xxvi 9.

the stirring of grace and use to dwell in this darkness, and be oft assaying to be homely therein, and it shall soon be made restful to thee. And the true light of ghostly knowing shall spring to thee, not all at once, but privily by little and by little as the prophet saith: *To the dwellers in the country of the shadow of death light was sprung.** That is, light of grace sprang and shall spring to all them that can dwell in the shadow of death, that is, in this darkness that is like to death. For as death slayeth a living body in all fleshly feelings of it, right so desire to love Jesus felt in this darkness slayeth all sins, all fleshly affections and all unclean thoughts for the time, and then nighest thou fast to Jerusalem. Thou art not there yet, but by small sudden lightnings that glide out of small caves from that city shalt thou be able to see it from far ere that thou come thereto. For wit thou well that, though thy soul be in this restful darkness without troubling of worldly vanities, it is not yet clothed all in light nor turned all into fire of love. But it feeleth well that there is somewhat above itself that it knoweth not nor hath not yet, but would have it and burningly yearneth it. And that is naught else but that sight of Jerusalem without forth, the which is like to a city that the prophet Ezekiel saw in his

* Isa. ix 2.

visions. He saith that he saw a city set upon an hill sloping to the south, that to his sight, when it was measured, was no more of length and of breadth than a reed that is six cubits and a palm of length. But as soon as he was brought into the city and looked about him, then thought he that it was wondrous much: for he saw many halls and chambers both open and privy, he saw gates and porches outward and inward, and much more building than I can say, in length and in breadth many hundred cubits. Then was this wonder to him how this city within was thus so long and so large, that without was so little to his sight. This city betokeneth the perfect love of God set in the hill of contemplation, the which, unto the sight of a soul that is without the feeling of it and travaileth in desire thereto, seemeth somewhat, but it seemeth but a little thing, no more than a rood, that is six cubits and a palm of length. By six cubits are understood the perfection of man's work, and by the palm a little touching of contemplation. He seeth well that there is such a thing, that passeth the desert of all working of man a little, as the palm passeth the six cubits, but he seeth not within what it is. Nevertheless if he may come within the city of contemplation, then seeth he much more than he saw first.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW A MAN SHALL KNOW FALSE ILLUMINATIONS FEIGNED BY THE FIEND FROM THE TRUE LIGHT OF KNOWING THAT COMETH OUT OF JERUSALEM; AND BY WHAT TOKENS

But now beware of the midday fiend, that feigneth light as if it came out of Jerusalem but is not so. For the fiend seeth that our Lord Jesus showeth light to His lovers of soothfastness, therefore in deceiving of them that are unwise he showeth a light, that is not true, under colour of a true light, and deceiveth them. Nevertheless how a soul may know the light of soothfastness, when it shineth from God, and when it is feigned through the enemy, I shall say as methinketh by an example of the firmament.

Sometime the firmament showeth a light from the sun which seemeth the sun and is not, and sometime the sun showeth truly. A knowing of that one from that other is this. The feigned sun showeth him not but between two black rainy clouds; then, because the sun is near, there shineth out from the clouds as it were a sun, yet is none. But the true sun showeth him when the firmament is clear or much cleared from the black clouds. Now to our purpose. Some

men, as it seemeth, forsake the love of the world and would come to the love of God and to the light of understanding of Him, but they will not come through this darkness that I have spoken of before. They will not know themselves truly nor meekly, what they have been before, nor what they are yet through sin, nor how naught they are in their own kind against God. They are not busy to enter into themselves, all other things outward being left, and slay all wicked stirrings of sin that rise in their hearts, of pride, envy or other sins, through lasting desire to Jesus in praying and in thinking, in silence and in weeping, and in other bodily and ghostly exercise as devout men and holy men have done. But as soon as they have forsaken the world as it were outward in likeness, or else soon after, they ween they are holy and able to have the ghostly understanding of the Gospel and of Holy Writ. And namely if they may fulfil letterly* the commandments of God and keep them from bodily sins, then they ween that they love God perfectly. And therefore they will anon preach and teach all other men, as if they had received grace of understanding in perfection of charity through special gift of the Holy Ghost. And also they are much more stirred thereto, forasmuch as they feel some-

* Letterly—*i.e.*, literally.

time much knowing, as it were suddenly given to them without great study before had, and also much fervour of love, as it seemeth, to preach truth and righteousness to their even-Christian. Therefore they hold it as a grace of God who visiteth them with His blessed light before other souls. Nevertheless if they will look well about them, they shall well see that this light of knowing and the heat that they feel cometh not of the true sun, that is our Lord Jesus, but it cometh from the midday fiend that feigneth light and likeneth him to the soul. And therefore shall he be known by example before said.

Light of cunning* that is feigned by the fiend to a dark soul is showed between two black raining clouds. The overcloud is presumption and highing of himself, the nether cloud is down-putting and a lowering of his even-Christian. Then what light of knowing or feeling of fervour that it be that shineth to a soul, with presumption and highing of itself and disdain of his even-Christian the same time felt, it is not light of grace given of the Holy Ghost though the knowing in itself were soothfast; but it is either of the fiend if it come suddenly, or else of man's own wit if it come by study. And so it may well be known if this feigned light of knowing is not the light of the true sun.

* Cunning—*i.e.*, knowledge, ability.

Therefore they that have this knowing on this manner are full of ghostly pride and see it not. They are so blind with this feigned light that they hold the highness of their own heart and unbuxomness to the laws of Holy Church as it were perfect meekness to the Gospel and to the laws of God; and they ween that the following of their own will were freedom of spirit, and therefore as black clouds they begin to rain water of errors and heresies, for the words that they show by preaching sound all to backbiting and to striving and to discord, making reproving of states and of persons; and yet say they that all this is charity and zeal of righteousness. But it is not sooth, for Saint James the apostle saith that *whereso envy is, and fliting*,* *there is unstableness and all evil work*.† And therefore that cunning that bringeth forth such sins cometh not from the Father of Light that is God, but is earthly, beastly and fiendly. And so by these tokens, that are pride, presumption, unbuxomness, indignation, backbiting, and other such sins—for these follow after—may the feigned light be known from the true. For the true sun shineth and showeth him not by special visitation to give light of understanding or perfect charity to a soul, unless the firma-

* Fliting—*i.e.*, scolding, contending.
† Jas. iii 16.

ment be first made bright and clear from clouds; that is unless the conscience be made clean through fire of burning desire to Jesus in this darkness which wasteth and burneth all wicked stirrings of pride, vainglory, ire, envy and all other sins in the soul, as the prophet saith: *Fire shall go before Him;* that is, desire of love shall go before Jesus in a man's soul, *and it shall burn all His enemies*,* that is, it shall waste all sins. For unless a soul be first smitten down from the height of itself by dread and meekness, and be well examined and burnt in this fire of desire, and as it were purified from all ghostly filth by long time in devout prayers and other ghostly exercises, it is not able to suffer the shinings of ghostly light nor to receive the precious liquor of perfect love of Jesus. But when it is purified and made subtle through this fire, then may it receive the precious light of ghostly knowing and the perfection of love that is true sun. Thus saith Holy Writ: *The true sun of righteousness*, that is our Lord Jesus, *shall spring to you that dread Him;*† that is, to meek souls that meek themselves under their even-Christian by knowing of their own wretchedness, and cast themselves down by naughting of themselves in their own substance through reverent

* Ps. xcvi 3.
† Mal. iv 2.

dread and ghostly beholding of Him lastingly, for that is perfect meekness.

Unto these souls the true sun shall spring, and illumine their reason in knowing of soothfastness and kindle their affection in burning of love, and then shall they both burn and shine. They shall through virtue of this heavenly sun burn in perfect love, and shine in knowing of God and ghostly things, for then be they reformed in feeling. Therefore he that will not be deceived, I hope it is good to him to draw down himself and hide him in this darkness, first from intermeddling of other men, as I have said, and forget all the world and follow Jesus with lasting desire offered in prayers and thinking on Him. Then I trow the light that cometh after this darkness is secure and soothfast, and that it shineth out of the city of Jerusalem from the true sun to a soul that travaileth in darkness and crieth after light, to show it the way and comfort it in travail; for I think that, after true darkness before, cometh never feigned light. That is, if a man truly and fully set himself to forsake the love of the world, and may through grace come to feeling and knowing of himself, and hold him meekly in that feeling, he shall not be deceived with none errors nor heresies nor fantasies; for all these come in by the gate of pride. Then if that pride may be stopped out, then there shall

no such sin rest in a soul; and though they come and proffer them, they shall not enter. For grace that a soul feeleth in this meek darkness shall teach the soul soothfastness, and show to it that all such profferings are of the enemy.

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW GREAT PROFIT IT IS TO THE SOUL TO BE BROUGHT THROUGH GRACE INTO LIGHTSOME DARKNESS, AND HOW A MAN SHALL DISPOSE HIM IF HE WILL COME THERETO

THERE are many devout souls that through grace come into this darkness and feel the knowing of themselves, and yet wot they not fully what it is; and that unknowing in part hindereth them. They feel often their thought and their affection well drawn out and departed from the mind of earthly things, and brought into a great rest of a delectable softness without painful troubling of vain thoughts or of their bodily wits; and they feel that time so great freedom of spirit that they may think on Jesus peaceably, and offer their psalms and prayers mightily savourly and sweetly to Him as long as frailty of the bodily kind may suffer it. They wot well that this feeling is good, but they wot not what it is. Therefore unto all such souls I say as methinketh, that this manner of

feeling—though it be but short and but seldom—it is soothfastly this darkness that I speak of; for it is a feeling of themselves first, and a rising above themselves through burning desire to the sight of Jesus. Or else, if I shall say more soothly, this gracious feeling is a ghostly sight of Jesus, and if they may keep them in that rest or bring it through grace into a custom, so that they might lightly and freely have it when they list, and hold them in it, they should never be overcome by temptation of the fiend nor of the flesh, nor by errors nor heresies; for they are set in the gate of contemplation, able and ready to receive the perfect love of Jesus. Therefore he that hath it, it is good that he know it meekly, keep it tenderly, and pursue it fervently, that no creature let him utterly from it that he follow it not when he may, and that he forget and set at naught all things that should put him from this, if he be free of himself and may do what he will without slander or dis-ease of his even-Christian. For methinketh that he may not come to this rest lightly, unless he have great plenty of grace and set himself to follow after the stirring of grace; and that ought he to do. For grace would ever be free, namely from sin and worldly business, and from all other things that let the working of it, though they be no sin.

Nevertheless another soul that hath not yet received this fulness of grace, if he desire to come to this ghostly knowing of Jesus, as much as in him is he must able himself to it, and put away all lettings that stop grace as much as he may. He must learn to die to the world, and forsake the love of it truly. First pride, bodily and ghostly, that he desire no worship, worldly cunning nor worldly craft, benefices nor riches, precious clothing nor worldly array, nor nothing where-through he should be worshipped above other men. He shall covet none of all these, but, if they be put upon him, take them with dread, so that he be poor both outward and inward, or else fully inward in heart. And that he covet to be forgotten of the world, that men regard him no more—be he never so rich nor so cunning—than the poorest man that liveth. Also that he suffer not his heart to rest in beholding of his own deeds or his virtues, weening that he doth better than another, because he forsaketh the world and others do not so, and therefore setteth well by himself. Also he must leave all rising of heart and evil will of ire and envy against his even-Christian, and that he dis-ease no man, nor anger him unskilfully in word nor in deed, nor give any man matter where-through he might skilfully be angered or stirred; so that he might

be free from every man. And also that he forsake covetousness, that he covet right naught of earthly good but only ask his bodily sustenance that he needeth, and hold him paid when God stirreth other men to give him aught. And that he put no manner of trust in any worldly good, nor in help or favour of any worldly friend, but principally and fully in God; for if he do otherwise he bindeth himself to the world, and he may not therefore be free to think on Jesus. And also gluttony and lechery, and also all other fleshly uncleanness utterly he must leave, that the affection be bound to no woman by fleshly homeliness. For it is no doubt that such blind love that is sometimes atwixt a man and a woman, and seemeth good and honest—for that they would not sin in deed—in the sight of God is full unclean and well great sin. For it is a great sin that a man shall suffer his affection—that should be fastened to Jesus and to all virtues and to all ghostly cleanness—to be bound with any fleshly love of any creature wilfully, namely if it be so much that it beareth down the thought and maketh it unrestful, that he may have no savour in God. Thus I hold it to be wilful if a man doth it and saith it is no sin, or else is so blinded with it that he will not see it. And also that a man covet no delicacies of meats and drinks only for lust of

his flesh, but hold him paid with such meats as he may easily have without great business —namely, if he be whole, what meat soever that will do away hunger and keep the body in common strength unto the service of God —and that he murmur not nor strive not, nor anger him not for his meat, though he be sometime not served as the flesh would.

All these sins and all other must he forsake utterly in his will and in deed when he may, and other things that let him, so that he may dispose him to think freely on Jesus. For as long as these lettings and such other hang upon him he may not die to the world, nor come into this darkness of knowing of himself, and therefore, that he might come thereto, he must do all this as Saint Paul did, saying thus: *This world is slain and crucified to me, and I to the world.** That is, he that hath forsaken the love of the world in worships and riches and all other worldly things beforesaid for the love of God, and loveth it not nor pursueth it not, but is well paid that he hath right naught of it, nor would have though he might, soothly to him the world is dead, for he hath no savour nor delight therein. Also if the world set him at naught and hath no regard to him, nor favour nor worship, nor set no price by him, but forgetteth him as a dead man, then is he

* Gal. vi 14.

dead to the world. And in this plight was Saint Paul set perfectly, and so must any other man in part that would follow and come to the perfect love of God; for he may not live to God fully, unless he die first to the world.

This dying to the world is this darkness, and it is the gate to contemplation and to reforming in feeling, and none other than this. There may be sundry ways and divers works letting and leading sundry souls to contemplation; for after divers disposings of men and after sundry states—as are religious and secular that they are in—are divers exercises in working. Nevertheless there is no gate but one; for what exercise it be that a soul hath, unless he may come by that exercise to this knowing and to a meek feeling of himself—and that is that he be mortified and dead to the world as in his love, and that he may feel himself sometimes in this restful darkness by which he may be hid from vanity of the world as in his love, and that he may feel himself what he is—soothly he is not yet come to reforming in feeling nor hath not fully contemplation. He is full far therefrom, and if he will come by any other gate, he is but a thief and a breaker of the wall, and therefore as unworthy shall he be cast out. But he that can bring himself first to naught by grace of meekness, and die on this manner, he is in the gate, for he is dead to the

world and he liveth to God. Of which Saint Paul speaketh thus: *Ye are dead*, that is, ye that for the love of God forsake all the love of the world are dead *to the world with Christ in God.** That is, ye live ghostly in the love of Jesus, but your life is hid from worldly men as Christ liveth and is hid in His godhead from the love and the sight of fleshly lovers.

This gate our Lord Himself showed in the Gospel when He said thus: *Every man that forsaketh for My love father or mother, sister or brother, or any earthly good, he shall have an hundredfold in this life, and afterward the bliss of heaven.*† This hundredfold that a soul shall have if he forsake the world is naught else but the profit of this lightsome darkness, the which I call the gate of contemplation. For he that is in this darkness, and is hid through grace from worldly vanity, he coveteth not of worldly good, he seeketh it not, he is not tarried therewith, he looketh not after it, he loveth it not, and therefore hath he an hundredfold more than the king or than he hath that coveteth most of earthly good. For he that coveteth naught but Jesus hath an hundredfold, for he hath more rest, more peace in heart, more very love and delight in soul in one day, than he that most coveteth of the world and hath all the

* Col. iii 3. † Matt. xix 29.

wealth of it under his will, hath in all his lifetime. This is then a good darkness and a rich naught that bringeth a soul to so much ghostly grace and to so still softness. I trow David meaned of this night or of this naught when he said, *I was brought to naught and I wist not.** That is: The grace of our Lord Jesus sent into mine heart hath slain in me and brought to naught all the love of the world, and I wist not how. For I have it not through any working of myself or by mine own wit, but of the grace of our Lord Jesus. And therefore, methinketh, he that will have the light of grace and fulsomely feel the love of Jesus in his soul, he must forsake all the false light of worldly love and abide in this darkness. And nevertheless if he be adread first to dwell therein, let him not turn again to love of the world, but suffer awhile and put all his hope and his trust in Jesus, and he shall not long be without some ghostly light. Thus biddeth the prophet: *Whoso goeth in darkness and hath no light*, that is, whoso will hide him from love of the world and may not feel readily the light of ghostly love, despair not, turn not again to love of the world, but *hope in our Lord and lean upon Him*,† that is, trust in God and cleave to Him by desire and abide awhile, and he shall have light. For it falleth thereby

* Ps. lxxii 22. † Isa. l 10.

as it doth if a man be a great while in the sun, and after that come suddenly into a dark house where no sun shineth. He should be as it were blind and see right naught, but if he will abide awhile he shall soon see more about him, first great things and then small, and soon after all that ever is in the house. Right so it is ghostly: he that forsaketh the love of the world and cometh to himself in his own conscience, it is first somewhat dark and blind to his sight. But if he stand still, and hold forth busy praying and often thinking the same will to the love of Jesus, he shall be able to see afterward great things and small that he first knew not. Thus seemeth it that the prophet behight, thus saying: *Light shall spring to thee in darkness.* That is, thou that forsakest soothfastly the light of all worldly love and hidest thy thought in this darkness, light of blessed love and ghostly knowing of God shall spring to thee. *And thy darkness shall be as midday.* That is, thy darkness of travailing desire and thy blind trust in God that thou hast first shall turn into clear knowing and into sureness of love. *And thy Lord God shall give rest to thee.* That is, thy fleshly desires and thy painful dreads and doubts, and wicked spirits that have beforehand travailed thee continually, all these shall weaken, and lose much of their might, and thou shalt be made

so strong that they shall not harm thee, for thou shalt be hid in rest from them. *And then shall our Lord fulfil thy soul with shinings.** That is: when thou art brought into this ghostly rest, then shalt thou more easily tend to God, and do naught else but love Him. And then shall He, with beams of ghostly light, fulfil all the mights of thy soul. Have no wonder though I call the forsaking of worldly love darkness, for the prophet calleth it so, saying thus to a soul: *Go into thy darkness thou daughter of Chaldee.*† That is, thou that art a daughter of Chaldee for love of the world, forsake it and go into thy darkness.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THAT IN REFORMING OF A SOUL THE WORKING OF OUR LORD JESUS IS DIVIDED INTO FOUR PARTS; THAT IS, CALLING, RIGHTING, MAGNIFYING AND GLORIFYING

Lo I have said to thee a little how, if thou covet to be reformed in feeling, thou shalt dispose thee toward in thy forthgoing. Nevertheless I say not that thou mayest do thus of thyself, for I wot well that our Lord Jesus bringeth all this to the end whereso He will. For He only through His grace stirreth a soul, and bringeth it into this dark-

* Isa. lviii 10, 11. † Isa. xlvii 5.

ness first, and sithen into light, as the prophet saith: *Right as the light of knowing and the feeling of ghostly love is of Jesus, right so the darkness that is the forsaking of worldly love is of Him,** for He doth all. He formeth and reformeth; He formeth only of Himself, but He reformeth us with us; for grace given, and applying of our will to grace, worketh all this. And on what manner wise He doth that, Saint Paul rehearseth thus: *These that God knew before should be made shapely to the image of His Son, these He called, these He righted, these He magnified, these He glorified.*†

Though these words may be said of all chosen souls in the lowest degree of charity, that are reformed only in faith; nevertheless they may be understood more specially of those souls that are reformed in feeling, to the which our Lord God showeth much plenty of grace, and doth much more business about them. For they are His own sons specially, that bear the full shape and the likeness of His Son Jesus. In the which words Saint Paul departeth the working of our Lord into four times. First is the time of calling to a soul from worldly vanity, and that time is often easy and comfortable. For in beginning of turning such a man, that is disposed to much grace, is so quickly and so feelingly inspired and feeleth often so great sweetness

* Ps. cxxxviii 12. † Rom. viii 29, 30.

of devotion, and hath so many tears in compunction, that he thinketh him sometimes as he were half in heaven; but this softness passeth after a time. And then cometh the second time, that is the time of righting, that is travailous. For when he beginneth to go forth mightily in the way of righteousness, and setteth his will full against all sin without and within, and stretcheth out his desire to virtues and to the love of Jesus, then feeleth he much letting—both within himself of frowardness and hardness of his own will, and from without through temptation of his enemy—that he is often in full great torment. And that is no wonder, for he hath so long been crooked to the false love of this world, that he may not be made right, as a crooked staff may not be made even, unless he be cast and baked in the fire. Therefore our Lord Jesus, seeing what thing is behovable to a froward soul, suffereth it to be travailed and tarried by sundry temptations, and to be well exercised through ghostly temptations that all the rust of uncleanness might be burnt out of it. And that shall be both within, of dreads and doubts and perplexities that it shall nearly fall into despair; and it shall seem as it were forsaken of God and left all in the hands of the fiend, save for a little privy trust that it shall have in the goodness of God and in His mercy. For that privy

trust our Lord leaveth in such a soul, go He never so far from it; by the which the soul is borne up from despair and saved from ghostly mischief. And also without itself it shall be mortified and pained in the sensuality, either by divers sickness, or by feelable torment of the fiend, or else through a privy might of God, the silly soul by feeling and busying of the wretched body shall be so pained, and it shall not wit how it shall suffer longer to be in the body, unless it were that our Lord Jesus kept it therein. And yet nevertheless had the soul liefer to be in all this pain than to be blinded with the false love of the world. For that were hell to such a soul; but the suffering of this manner of pain is naught but purgatory, and therefore he suffereth it gladly, and he would not put it away though he might, for it is so profitable. All this doth our Lord in great profit of the soul, to drive it out of the sensuality, that it might receive ghostly light.

For after this, when the soul is thus mortified and brought from worldly love into this darkness, so that it hath no more savour nor delight of worldly liking than of a straw but thinketh it bitter as wormwood, then cometh the third time of magnifying. And that is when the soul is reformed in feeling in part, and receiveth the gift of perfection and the grace of contemplation; and that is

a time of great rest, for then is Jesus more homely with a soul. And after this cometh the fourth time, of glorifying. That is when the soul shall be fully reformed in the bliss of heaven. For these souls that are thus called from sin and thus righted (or else on other manner like) by divers assaying through fire and water, and afterwards are thus magnified, they shall be glorified. For our Lord shall then give them fully that which they here coveted, and more than they could covet. For He shall raise them above all other chosen souls to the evenhead of cherubim and seraphim, seeing they passed all others in knowing and loving of God here in this life. Therefore he that will come to this magnifying let him not dread this righting, for that is the way. For our Lord saith by His prophet a word of great comfort to all such souls that are examined with the fire of tribulation, thus: *My child, if thou pass through fire, dread not, for the flame shall not harm thee.** It shall cleanse thee from all fleshly filth and make thee able to receive ghostly fire of the love of God. And that needeth to be done first. For as I have before said, it may not else be reformed in feeling.

* Isa. xliii 2.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW IT FALLETH SOMETIMES THAT SOULS BEGINNING AND PROFITING IN GRACE SEEM TO HAVE MORE LOVE, AS BY OUTWARD TOKENS, THAN SOME HAVE THAT BE PERFECT; AND YET IT IS NOT SO IN SOOTH WITHIN

But now sayest thou: How may this be sooth? For there are many souls new turned to God that have many ghostly feelings. Some have great compunction for their sins, and some have great devotions and fervours in their prayers, and often have sundry teachings of ghostly light in understanding, and some men have other manner feelings of comfortable heat and great sweetness, and nevertheless these souls come never fully into this restful darkness that I speak of, with fervent desire and lasting love and thought in God. Then askest thou whether these souls be reformed in feeling or not? It seemeth yes, inasmuch as they have such great ghostly feelings that other men, that stand only in faith, feel not of.

Unto this I may say as methinketh, that these ghostly feelings, whether they stand in compunction or devotion, or in ghostly imagination, are not the feelings which a soul shall have and feel in the grace of contempla-

tion. I say not but that they are soothfast and graciously given of God. But these souls that feel such are not yet reformed in feeling, nor they have not yet the gift of perfection nor ghostly such burning love of Jesus as they may come to. And nevertheless often it seemeth otherwise that such souls feel more of the love of God than others that have the gift of perfection, inasmuch as the feeling showeth more outward by great fervour of bodily tokens, in weeping, praying, kneeling and speaking, and other bodily stirring; so far forth that it seemeth to another man that they were ever ravished in love. And though methinketh it is not so, well I wot that this manner of feelings and fervours of devotion and compunction that these men feel are gracious gifts of God sent into chosen souls, to draw them out of worldly love and fleshly lust that have been long time rooted in their heart, from which love they should not be drawn out but by such seeable stirring of great fervours.

Nevertheless that the fervour is so much in outward showing, it is not only for muchness of love that they have it, but for littleness and weakness of their soul, that may not bear a little touching of God. For it is as yet as it were fastened to the flesh, and never was yet departed from it by ghostly mortifying; and therefore the least touching of love and

the least sparkle of ghostly light sent from heaven into such a soul is so much and so comfortable, so sweet and so delectable, over all the liking that it ever felt before in fleshly love of earthly things, that it is overtaken with it. And also it is so new and sudden and so uncouth* that it may not suffer to bear it, but bursteth and showeth out in weeping, sobbing, and other bodily stirring. Right as the costrel† that is old, when it receiveth new wine that is fresh and mighty, the costrel bolneth‡ out and is in point to cleave and burst, until the wine hath boiled and purged out all uncleanness. But as soon as the wine is fined and cleared, then it standeth still and the costrel whole. Right so a soul that is old through sin, when it receiveth a little of the love of God, that is so fresh and so mighty that the body is in point to cleave and to break, were it not that God keepeth it whole. But yet it bursteth out at the eyes by weeping and at the mouth by speaking, and that is more for weakness and feebleness of soul than for muchness of love. For afterwards, when love hath boiled all the uncleanness out of the soul by such great fervours, then is love clear and standeth still; and then is both the body and the soul much more in peace, and

* Uncouth—*i.e.*, strange, unknown.
† Costrel—*i.e.*, barrel, wine skin.
‡ Bolneth—*i.e.*, swelleth.

yet hath the soul much more love than it had before, though it show less outward. For it is now all whole in rest within, and naught but little in outward showing of fervour. And therefore I say that these souls that feel such great bodily fervours, though they be in much grace, are not yet reformed in feeling, but they are greatly disposed toward. For I trow that such a man, namely one that hath been greatly defiled in sin, shall not be reformed in feeling, unless he be first burnt and purified with such great compunctions going before. Another soul that never was much defiled with love of the world, but hath ever been kept from great sins in innocence, may lightlier and more privily, without great fervour showed outward, come to this reforming.

Then is this sooth, as I think, that such comforts and fervours that a soul feeleth in a state of beginning or of profiting are as it were his ghostly food sent from heaven, to strengthen him in his travail. Right as a pilgrim travaileth all day meatless and drinkless, and is nearly overcome with weariness, falleth at the last to a good inn, and there hath he meat and drink and is well refreshed for the time; right so ghostly a devout soul that will forsake the love of the world, and would fain love God and setteth all his business thereto, prayeth and travaileth all

day bodily and ghostly, and sometime feeleth no comfort nor savour in devotion. Then our Lord, having pity over all His creatures, that it should not perish for default nor turn into heaviness or murmuring, sendeth it among His ghostly food, and comforteth it in devotion as He vouchsafeth. And when the soul feeleth any comfort, then holdeth he him well paid for all his travail and all the dis-ease that it had on the day, when it fareth well at even by feeling of any grace. Thus likewise falleth it of other souls that are profiting and far forth in grace. They feel ofttimes gracious touchings of the Holy Ghost in their soul, both in understanding and sight of ghostly things, and in affection of love. But yet be they not reformed in feeling, nor are they yet perfect. For why, all such feelings come to them in that state as it were unwarily, for they come ere they wit it, and they cannot come thereto again nor wit they when they shall find it. For they have not yet homeliness with the thought and lasting desire in Jesus, nor the eye of their soul is not opened to the beholding of ghostly things, but they nigh fast toward. And therefore they are not yet reformed in feeling, nor they have not yet the full gift of contemplation.

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHAT MANNER A MAN SHALL HAVE KNOWING OF HIS OWN SOUL; AND HOW A MAN SHOULD SET HIS LOVE IN JESUS, GOD AND MAN, ONE PERSON

It needeth a soul that would have knowledge of ghostly things, to have first knowing of itself. For it may not have knowing of a kind above itself unless it have knowing of itself; and that is when the soul is so gathered into itself and departed from beholding of all earthly things and from the use of bodily wits, that it feeleth itself as it is in its own kind without a body. Then if thou covet to know and see thy soul what it is, thou shalt not turn thy thought with imagination into thy body to seek it and feel it, as it were hid within thy heart as thy heart is hid and holden within thy body. If thou seek so, thou shalt never find it in itself. The more thou seekest to find and feel it as thou wouldest a bodily thing, the further thou art therefrom. For thy soul is no body but a life unseeable; not hid and holden within thy body as a less thing is hid and holden within a more, but it is holding and quickening thy body, much more than thy body is in might and virtue.

Then if thou wilt find it, withdraw thy thought from all bodily thing outward, and from mind of thine own body also, and from thy five wits as much as thou may; and think on the kind of a reasonable soul ghostly, as thou wouldest think to know any virtue, as soothfastness or meekness or any other. Right so think that a soul is a life, immortal and unseeable, and hath might in itself to see and know the sovereign soothfastness, and to love the sovereign goodness that is God. When thou seest this, then feelest thou somewhat of thyself. Seek thyself in none other place; but the more fully and the more clearly that thou mayest think of the kind and the worthiness of a reasonable soul —what it is, and what is the kindly working of it—the better seest thou thyself. It is full hard for a soul that is rude and much in the flesh to have sight and knowing of it, or of an angel, or of God; it falleth anon into imagination of bodily shape, and it weeneth thereby to have the sight of itself, and so of God, and so of ghostly things. And that may not be; for all ghostly things are seen and known by understanding of the soul, not by imagination. Right as a soul seeth by understanding that the virtue of righteousness is to give to everything that which it ought to have, right so and on such a manner may the soul see itself by understanding.

Nevertheless I say not that thy soul shall rest still in this knowing, but it shall by this seek higher knowing above itself, and that is the kind of God. For a soul is but a mirror, in the which thou shalt see God ghostly. And therefore thou shalt first find thy mirror and keep it bright and clean from fleshly filth and worldly vanity, and hold it well up from the earth that thou mayest see it, and our Lord therein also. For to this end travail all chosen souls in this life, in their meaning and their intent; though they have not specially the feeling of this. And therefore it is, as I have said before, that many souls beginning and profiting have many great fervours and much sweet devotion, and as it seemeth burn all in love, and yet they have not perfectly love nor ghostly knowing of God. For wit thou well, feel a soul never so much fervour, so much that he thinketh that the body may not bear it, or though he melt all into weeping, as long as his thinking and his beholding of God is most or all in imagination and not in understanding, he cometh not yet to perfect love nor to contemplation.

For thou shalt understand that the love of God is on three manner wise. All are good, but each one is better than other. The first cometh only through faith, without gracious imagination or ghostly knowing of God. This love is in the least soul that is reformed

in faith, in the lowest degree of charity; and it is good, for it sufficeth to salvation. The second love is that which a soul feeleth through faith and imagination of Jesus in His manhood. This love is better than the first, when the imagination is stirred by grace; for why, then the ghostly eye is opened in beholding of our Lord's manhood. The third love that the soul feeleth through ghostly sight of the Godhead in the manhood, as it may be seen here, is best and most worthy, and that is perfect love. This love a soul feeleth not until it be reformed in feeling. Souls beginning and profiting have not this love, for they cannot think on Jesus nor love Him godly, but as it were all manly and fleshly after the conditions and likeness of man. And upon that regard they shape all their working in their thoughts and in their affections. They dread Him as a man and worship Him and love Him principally in manly imagination, and go no further. As thus: if they have done amiss and trespassed against God, they think that God is wroth with them as a man should be if they had trespassed against him, and therefore they fall down as it were to the feet of our Lord with sorrow of heart and cry mercy. And when they do thus they have a good trust that our Lord of His mercy will forgive them their trespass. This manner of doing

is right good, but it is not ghostly as it might be. Also when they will worship God they present them in their thoughts as it were before our Lord's face in a bodily likeness and imagine a wonderful light where our Lord Jesus is, and then they reverence Him, and worship Him and dread Him, and fully put them in His mercy to do with them what He will. Also when they will love God, they behold Him, worship Him, and dread Him as a man, not yet as God in man, either in His passion or in some other thing of His manhood. And in that beholding they feel their hearts much stirred to the love of God.

This manner of working is good and gracious, but it is much less and lower than is the working of understanding; that is when the soul graciously beholdeth God in man. For in our Lord Jesus are two kinds, the manhood and the Godhead. Then right as the godhead is more sovereign and more worthy than is the manhood, right so our ghostly beholding of the godhead in Jesus man, is more worthy, more ghostly, and more meedful than the beholding of the manhood alone, whether we behold the manhood as deadly or as glorified. And right so by the same skill the love that a soul feeleth in thinking and beholding of the godhead in man, when it is graciously showed, is worthier, ghostlier and more meedful than

the fervour of devotion that the soul feeleth by imagination only of the manhood, show it never so much outward. For in regard of that, this is but manly; for our Lord showeth Him not in imagination as He is, nor what He is, for the soul might not at that time, for frailty of the fleshhead, suffer it so. Nevertheless unto such souls that cannot think of the godhead ghostly, that they should not err in their devotion, but that they should be comforted and strengthened through some manner inward beholding of Jesus, to forsake sin and the love of the world; therefore our Lord Jesus tempereth His unseeable light of His godhead, and clotheth it under bodily likeness of His manhood, and showeth it unto the inner eye of a soul, and feedeth it with the love of His precious flesh ghostly; the which love is of so great might that it slayeth all wicked love in the soul and strengtheneth it to suffer bodily penance and other bodily dis-ease in time of need for love of Jesus. And this is the shadowing of our Lord Jesus over a chosen soul, in the which shadowing the soul is kept from burning of worldly love. For right as a shadow is made of a light and of a body, right so this ghostly light is made of the blessed unseeable light of the godhead and of the manhood oned thereto, showed to a devout soul. Of which shadow the prophet saith: *Our Lord Christ before our*

*face is a spirit; under His shadow we shall live among folk.** That is, our Lord Jesus in His godhead is a spirit, that may not be seen of us living in the flesh as He is in His blessed light. Therefore we shall live under the shadow of His manhood as long as we are here. But though this be sooth that this love in imagination be good, nevertheless a soul should desire to have ghostly love in understanding of the godhead, for there is the end and the full bliss of the soul, and all bodily beholdings are but means leading a soul to it. I say not that we should refuse the manhood of Jesus and depart God from man, but thou shalt in Jesus man behold, dread, wonder and love ghostly the godhead. And so shalt thou without departing love God in man, and both God and man ghostly and not fleshly.

Thus our Lord taught Mary Magdalen, that should be contemplative, when He said thus: *Touch Me not, I am not yet styed up*† *to My Father.*‡ That is to say, Mary Magdalen loved well our Lord Jesus before the time of His passion, but her love was much bodily and little ghostly. She trowed well that He was God, but she loved Him little as God, for she could not then; and therefore she suffered all her affection and

* Lam. iv 20. † Styed up—*i.e.*, ascended.
‡ John xx 17.

all her thought to fall on Him as He was in form of man. And our Lord blamed her not then, but praised it much. But after, when He was risen from death and appeared to her, she would have worshipped Him with such manner love as she did before; and then our Lord forbade her and said thus, *Touch Me not.* That is: set not thy rest nor the love of thine heart in that form of man that thou seest with thy fleshly eye only, to rest therein; *for* in that form *I am not styed up to My Father.* That is, I am not even to the Father, for in that form of man I am less than He. Touch Me not so, but set thy thought and thy love in that form in which I am equal to the Father—that is, the form of the Godhead—and love Me, know Me, worship Me as God and man godly, not as a man manly. For seeing I am both God and man, and all the cause why I shall be loved and worshipped is because I am God, and because I took the kind of man, therefore make Me a God in thine heart and in thy love, and worship Me in thine understanding as Jesus, God and man, sovereign soothfastness and sovereign goodness and blessed life, for that I am. And thus our Lord taught her, as I understand, and also all other souls, that are disposed to contemplation and able thereto, that they should do so.

Nevertheless other souls that are not subtle

in kind, nor are not yet made ghostly through grace, it is good to them that they keep forth their own working in imagination with manly affection, until more grace come freely to them. It is not secure to a man to leave one good thing utterly till he see and feel a better. Upon the same wise may it be said of other manner feelings that are like to bodily, as hearing of delectable song, or feeling of comfortable heat in the body, seeing of light or sweetness of bodily savour. These are not ghostly feelings, for ghostly feelings are felt in the mights of the soul, principally in understanding and love, and little in imagination; but these feelings are felt in the mights of the body in imagination, and therefore they are not ghostly feelings, but when they are best and most true yet are they but outward tokens of the inly grace that is felt in the mights of the soul. This may be openly proved by Holy Writ, saying thus: *The Holy Ghost appeared to the apostles* in the day of Pentecost *in the likeness of burning tongues*, and inflamed their hearts *and sat upon each of them.** Now sooth it is the Holy Ghost, that is God in Himself unseeable, was not that fire nor those tongues that were seen, nor that burning that was felt bodily; but He was unseeably felt in the mights of their souls, for He lightened their

* Acts ii 3.

reason and kindled their affection through His blessed presence so clearly and so burningly, that they had suddenly the ghostly knowing of soothfastness and the perfection of love, as our Lord promised them saying thus: *The Holy Ghost shall teach you all soothfastness.** Then was that fire and that burning naught else but a bodily token, outward showed in witnessing of that grace that was inwardly felt. And as it was in them, so it is in other souls that are visited and lightened within of the Holy Ghost, and have with that such outward feeling in comfort and witnessing of the grace inward. But that grace is not, as I think, in all souls that are perfect, but where our Lord will. Other imperfect souls that have such feelings outward and have not yet received the inward grace, it is not good to them to rest in such feelings outward, but inasmuch as they help the soul to more love and to more stableness of thought in God. For some may be true and some may be feigned, as I have said before.

* John xvi 13.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW THIS MANNER OF SPEAKING OF REFORMING IN FEELING OF A SOUL SHALL BE TAKEN, AND ON WHAT WISE IT IS REFORMED; AND HOW IT IS FOUND IN SAINT PAUL'S WORDS

Now I have said to thee a little of reforming in faith, and also I have touched to thee a little of the forthgoing from that reforming to the higher reforming that is in feeling. Not in the intent that I would by these words set God's working under a law of my speaking; as if to say, thus worketh God in a soul and none otherwise. Nay, I mean not so: but I say, after my simple feeling, that our Lord worketh thus in some creatures as I think. And I know well that He worketh otherwise also, that passeth my wit and my feeling. Nevertheless, whether He work thus or otherwise, by sundry means, in longer time or shorter time, with much travail or with little travail, if all come to one end—that is to the perfect love of Him—then it is good enough. For if He will give one soul on one day the full grace of contemplation and without any travail, as He well may, as good is it to that soul as if he had been examined, pained, mortified and purified for twenty winters. And therefore upon this

manner take thou my saying, as I have said and as I think to say. For now by the grace of our Lord Jesus shall I speak a little as methinketh more openly of reforming in feeling; what it is, and how it is made, and which are ghostly feelings that a soul receiveth. Nevertheless first, that I take not this manner of speaking of reforming of a soul in feeling as feigning or fantasy, therefore I shall ground it in Saint Paul's words, when he saith thus: *Ye that are through grace reformed in faith, conform you not henceforward to the manners of the world, in pride, in covetousness, and in other sins; but be ye reformed in newhead of feeling.** Lo here thou mayest see that Saint Paul speaketh of reforming in feeling. And what that new feeling is he expoundeth in another place thus: *We pray God that ye may be fulfilled in knowing of God's will, in all understanding and in all manner of ghostly wisdom.*† This is reforming in feeling. For thou shalt understand that the soul hath two manner of feelings: one without of the five bodily wits, another within of the ghostly wits; the which are properly the mights of the soul, mind, reason, and will. When these mights are through grace fulfilled in all understanding of the will of God and ghostly wisdom, then hath the soul new gracious feelings. That

* Rom. xii 2. † Col. i 9.

this is sooth he showeth in another place thus: *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your soul ;** that is, Ye shall be reformed not in bodily feeling nor in imagination, but in the over part of your reason. And clothe you in a new man, that is shapen after God in righteousness, holiness, and soothfastness. That is: your reason—that is properly the image of God through grace of the Holy Ghost—shall be clothed in a new light of soothfastness, holiness, and righteousness, and then is it reformed in feeling. For when the soul hath perfect knowing of God, then is it reformed. Thus saith Saint Paul: *Spoil yourself of the old man with all his deeds ;* that is, cast from you the love of the world with all worldly manners. And *clothe you in a new man ; that is, ye shall be renewed in the knowing of God after the likeness of Him that made you.*† By these words thou mayest understand that Saint Paul would have men's souls reformed in perfect knowing of God, for that is the new feeling that he speaketh of generally. And therefore upon his words I shall say more openly of this reforming, as God giveth me grace. For there is two manner knowing of God. One is had principally in imagination and little in understanding; this knowing is in chosen souls beginning and profiting in grace, that

* Eph. iv 23, 24. † Col. iii 9, 10.

know God and love Him all manly not ghostly, with manly affections and with bodily likeness as I have before said. This knowing is good, and it is likened to milk by the which they are tenderly nourished as children, until they be able to come to the father's board and take of his hand whole bread. Another knowing is principally felt in understanding and little in imagination. For the understanding is as a lady, and the imagination is as a maiden, serving to the understanding when need is. This knowing is whole bread, meat for perfect souls, and it is reforming in feeling.

CHAPTER XXXII

HOW GOD OPENETH THE INNER EYE OF THE SOUL TO SEE HIM, NOT ALL AT ONCE BUT BY DIVERS TIMES. AND OF THREE MANNERS OF REFORMING OF A SOUL BY ENSAMPLE

A SOUL that is called from the love of the world, and after that is righted and assayed, mortified and purified, as I have before said, our Lord Jesus of His merciful goodness reformeth it in feeling when He vouchsafeth. He openeth the inner eye of the soul when He lighteneth the reason through touching and shining of His blessed light, to see Him and know Him; not all fully at once, but little and little by divers times as the soul may suffer

Him. He seeth Him not what He is, for that may no creature do in heaven nor in earth; nor he seeth Him not as He is, for that sight is only in the bliss of heaven. But he seeth Him that He is an unchangeable being; sovereign might, sovereign soothfastness, sovereign goodness, a blessed life, an endless bliss. This seeth the soul, and much more that cometh withal; not blindly and nakedly and unsavourly, as doth a clerk that seeth Him by his clergy only through might of his naked reason, but he seeth Him in understanding that is comforted and lighted by the gift of the Holy Ghost with a wonderful reverence and a privy burning love and with ghostly savour and heavenly delight, more clearly and more fully than it may be written or said.

This sight, though it be but shortly and little, is so worthy and so mighty that it draweth and ravisheth all the affection of the soul from beholding and mind of all earthly things thereto, to rest therein evermore if it might. And on this manner of sight and knowing the soul groundeth all his inward working in all the affections. For then it dreadeth God in man as soothfastness, wondereth Him as might, loveth Him as goodness. This sight and this knowing of Jesus, with the blessed love that cometh out of it, may be called reforming of a soul in

faith and in feeling that I speak of. It is in faith, for it is dark as yet in regard of that full knowing of Jesus, with the blessed love that cometh out of it, that shall be in heaven. For then shall we see Him, not only that He is, but as He is; as Saint John saith: *Then shall we see Him as He is.** Nevertheless it is in feeling also as in regard of that blind knowing that a soul hath standing only in faith. For this soul knoweth somewhat of the very kind of Jesus God through this gracious sight, but that other knoweth not, but only troweth it is sooth.

Nevertheless that thou the better mayest conceive what I mean, I shall show these three manners of reforming of a soul, by ensample of three men standing in the light of the sun. Of the which three one is blind, another may see but he hath his eyes stopped, the third looketh forth full sight. The blind man hath no manner of knowing that he is in the sun, but he troweth it if a true man tell him; and he betokeneth a soul that is only reformed in faith, and troweth in God as Holy Church teacheth, and wots not what. This sufficeth as for salvation. That other man seeth a light of the sun, but he seeth it not clearly what it is; for the lid of his eye letteth him that he may not see. But he seeth through the lid of his eye a glimmering

* John iii 2.

of great light; and he betokeneth a soul that is reformed in faith and in feeling, and so is he contemplative. For he seeth somewhat of the Godhead of Jesus through grace; not clearly nor fully, because the lid, that is his bodily kind, is yet a wall betwixt his kind and the kind of Jesus God, and letteth him from the clear sight. But he seeth through this wall, after that grace toucheth him more or less, that Jesus is God and that Jesus is sovereign goodness and sovereign being and a blessed life, and that all other goodness cometh of Him. This seeth the soul by grace, notwithstanding the bodily kind, and the more clear and subtle that the soul is made, and the more it is departed from fleshlihead, the sharper sight it hath and the mightier love of the godhead of Jesus. This sight is so mighty that, though none other man living would trow in Jesus nor love Him, he would never trow the less nor love Him the less; for he seeth it soothfastly that he may not untrow it. The third man, that hath full sight of the sun, he troweth it not for he seeth it fully; and he betokeneth a full blessed soul that, without any wall of body or of sin, seeth openly the face of Jesus in the bliss of heaven. There is no faith, and therefore he is fully reformed in feeling. There is no state above the second reforming that a soul may come to here in this life; for this is

the state of perfection and the way heavenward. Nevertheless all the souls that are in this state are not all alike farforth. For some have it little, shortly and seldom; and some have it longer, clearer and oftener; and some have it best, clearest and longest, after the abounding of grace; and yet all these have the gift of contemplation. For the soul hath not perfect sight of Jesus all at once, but first a little and a little, and after that it profiteth and cometh to more feeling. And as long as it is in this life it may wax more in knowing and in this love of Jesus. And soothly I wot not what were more lief to such a soul that hath felt a little of it than utterly—all other things being left and set at naught—to tend only to have clearer sight and cleaner love of Jesus in whom is all the blessed Trinity.

This manner knowing of Jesus, as I understand, is the opening of heaven to the eye of a clean soul, of the which holy men speak in their writings. Not as some ween, that the opening of heaven is as if a soul might see by imagination through the skies above the firmament how our Lord Jesus sitteth in His majesty in a bodily light as much as a hundred suns. Nay, it is not so; nor though he see never so high on that manner, soothly he seeth not the ghostly heaven. The higher he ascendeth above the sun to see Jesus, the lower he falleth beneath the sun. Never-

theless this manner of sight is sufferable to simple souls that can no better seek Him that is unseeable.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOW JESUS IS HEAVEN TO THE SOUL; AND WHY HE IS CALLED FIRE

WHAT is heaven to a reasonable soul? Soothly naught else but Jesus God. For if that be heaven only that is above all earthly thing, then is God only heaven to man's soul, for He only is above the kind of a soul. Then if a soul may through grace have knowing of that blessed kind of Jesus, soothly he seeth heaven for he seeth God. Therefore there are many men that err in understanding of some words that are said of God, for they understand them not ghostly. Holy writing saith that a soul that will find God shall lift upward the inner eye and seek God above itself. Then some men, that will do after this saying, understand this word "above themselves" as for higher setting in stead and worthiness of place, as one element and one planet is above another in setting and worthiness of bodily place; but it is not so ghostly. For a soul is above all bodily things, not by setting of stead but by substance and worthiness of kind. Right so on

the self wise God is above all bodily and ghostly creatures, not by setting of stead but through subtlety and worthiness of His unchangeable blessed kind. And therefore he that will wisely seek God and find Him, he shall not run out with his thought, as if he would climb above the sun and part the firmament and imagine the majesty as it were of a hundred suns; he shall rather draw down the sun and all the firmament, and forget it and cast it beneath him where he is, and set all this and all bodily thing also at naught, and think then, if he can ghostly, both of himself and of God also. And if he do thus, then seeth the soul above itself, then seeth it into heaven.

Upon this same manner shall this word "within" be understood. It is commonly said that a soul shall see our Lord within all thing and within itself. Sooth it is that our Lord is within all creatures, but not on that manner that a kernel is hid within the shell of a nut, or as a little bodily thing is holden within another such. But He is within all creatures as holding and keeping them in their being, through subtlety and might of His own blessed kind and cleanness unseeable. For right as a thing which is most precious and most clean is laid innermost, right so by that likeness it is said that the kind of God, that is most precious, most clean

and most ghostly, furthest from bodihead, is hid within all things. And therefore he that will seek God within, he shall forget first all bodily things—for all that is without—and his own body; and he shall forget thinking of his own soul and think on the unmade kind that is Jesus, that made him, and giveth him reason and mind and love; the which is within him through His might and sovereign subtlety. Upon this manner shall the soul do when grace toucheth it, or else it will but little avail to seek Jesus and to find Him within itself and within all creatures as methinketh.

Also it is said in Holy Writ that *God is light*. So saith Saint John.* This light shall not be understood as for bodily light, but it is understood thus, that God is truth and soothfastness, for soothfastness is ghostly light. Then he that most graciously knoweth soothfastness, best knoweth God. And nevertheless it is likened to the bodily light for this reason. Right as the sun to the bodily eye showeth itself and all bodily things by it: right so soothfastness, that is God, showeth to the reason of the soul itself first, and by itself all other ghostly thing that needeth to the knowing of a soul. Thus saith the prophet: *Lord, we shall see thy light by Thy light*.† That is, we shall see Thee that

* 1 John i 5. † Ps. xxxv 9.

art soothfastness by Thyself. On the same wise it is said that God is fire: *Our Lord is fire wasting.** That is to say, God is not fire elementary, that heateth the body and burneth it, but God is love and charity. For as fire wasteth all bodily thing that may be wasted, right so the love of God burneth and wasteth all sin out of the soul and maketh it clean, as fire maketh clean all manner metal.

These words, and all other that are spoken of our Lord in Holy Writ by bodily likeness, must needs be understood ghostly, else there is no savour in them. Nevertheless the cause why such manner words are said of our Lord in Holy Writ is this. We are so fleshly that we cannot speak of God nor understand of Him, unless we by such words first be entered in. Nevertheless when the inner eye is opened through grace to have a little sight of Jesus, then shall the soul turn lightly enough all such words of bodily things into ghostly understanding. This ghostly opening of the inner eye into knowing of the Godhead I call reforming in faith and feeling. For then the soul somewhat feeleth in understanding of that thing that it had before in naked trowing. And that is the beginning of contemplation, of which Saint Paul saith thus: *Our contemplation is not in things that are seen, but it is in things unseeable. For*

* Heb. xii 29.

*things that are seen are passing, but unseeable things are everlasting.** To which sight every soul should desire to come, both here in part and in the bliss of heaven fully. For in that sight and in that knowing of Jesus is fully the bliss of a reasonable soul, and endless life. Thus saith our Lord: *Father, this is endless life; that Thy chosen souls know Thee and Thy Son whom Thou hast sent,*† one soothfast God.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OF TWO MANNERS OF LOVE, REFORMED AND UNREFORMED, WHAT IT MEANETH. AND HOW WE SHOULD BE BEHOLDEN TO LOVE JESUS MUCH FOR OUR MAKING, BUT MORE FOR OUR AGAIN-BUYING,‡ AND MOST OF ALL FOR OUR SAVING THROUGH THE GIFTS OF HIS LOVE

BUT now wonderest thou, since this knowing of God is the bliss and the end of a soul, why then have I said here before that a soul should covet naught else but only the love of God; and spake nothing of this sight, that a soul should covet this. Unto this I may say thus, that the sight of Jesus is full bliss of a soul, and that is not only for the sight, but also for the blessed love that cometh out of that sight.

* 2 Cor. iv 18. † John xvii 3.
‡ Ayen-buying—*i.e.*, ransoming, redemption.

Nevertheless because love cometh out of knowing, and not knowing out of love, therefore it is said that in knowing and in sight principally of God with love is the bliss of a soul, and the more He is known the better is He loved. But forasmuch as to this knowing, or to this love that cometh of it, the soul may not come without love, therefore I said that thou shouldest covet love, for love is cause why a soul cometh to this knowing and to this love that cometh of it. And on what manner that is I shall tell thee more openly.

Holy writers say, and sooth it is, that there is two manner of ghostly love. One is called formed, another is called unformed. Love unformed is God Himself, the third Person in the Trinity—that is, the Holy Ghost. He is love unformed and unmade as Saint John saith: *God is love**—that is, the Holy Ghost. Love formed is the affection of the soul, made by the Holy Ghost of the sight and knowing of soothfastness, that is God only, stirred and set in Him. This love is called formed, for it is made by the Holy Ghost. This love is not God in Himself, for it is made, but it is the love of the soul, felt of the sight of Jesus and stirred to Him only. Now mayest thou see that love formed is not cause why a soul cometh to the ghostly

* 1 John iv 8.

sight of Jesus, as some men would think that they would love God so burningly as it were by their own might, that they were worthy to have the ghostly knowing of Him. Nay it is not so. But love unformed, that is, God Himself, is cause of all this knowing. For a blind wretched soul is so far from the clear knowing and the blessed feeling of His love through sin and frailty of the bodily kind, that it might never come to it, were it not for the endless meekness of the love of God. But then because He loved us so much, therefore He giveth us His love, that is the Holy Ghost. He is the giver and the gift, and maketh us then by that gift to know and love Him. Lo, this is the love that I spake of, that thou shouldest only covet and desire this unformed love that is the Holy Ghost. For soothly a less thing or a less gift than He is may not avail to bring us to the blessed sight of Jesus. And therefore shall we fully desire and ask of Jesus only this gift of love, that He would for the muchness of His love so blessed touch our hearts with His unseeable light to the knowing of Him, and depart with us of His love, that as He loveth us we might love Him again. Thus saith Saint John: *Love we God now, for He first loved us.** He loved us much when He made us to His likeness, but He

* 1 John iv 19.

loved us more when He bought us with His precious blood, through wilful taking of death in His manhood, from the power of the fiend and from the pain of hell. But He loveth us most when He giveth us the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is love, by which we know Him and love Him and are made secure that we are His sons chosen to salvation. Because of this love are we more to Him bound than for any other love that ever showed He for us, either in our making or in our again-buying. For though He had made us and bought us, unless He save us withal, what profiteth it else to us our making and our buying? Soothly right naught.

Therefore the most token of love showed to us, as methinketh, is this; that He giveth Himself in His Godhead to our souls. He gave Himself first in His manhead to us for our ransom, when He offered Himself to the Father of heaven upon the altar of the Cross. This was a right fair gift and a right great token of love. But what time He giveth Himself in His Godhead to our souls for our salvation and maketh us to know Him and to love Him, then loveth He us fully, for then giveth He Himself to us; and more might He not give us, nor less might not suffice to us. And for this skill is it said that the righting of a sinful soul through for-

giveness of sins is aretted and appropered* principally to the working of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost is love, and in the righting of a soul our Lord Jesus showeth to a soul most of His love, for He doth away all sin and oneth it to Him. And that is the best thing that He may do to a soul, and therefore it is appropered to the Holy Ghost. The making of a soul is appropered to the Father, as for the sovereign might and power that He showeth in the making of it. The buying of it is aretted to the Son, as for the sovereign wit and wisdom that He showed in His manhood. For He overcame the fiend principally through wisdom and not through strength. But the righting and the full saving of a soul by forgiveness of sins is appropered to the third Person, that is the Holy Ghost. For therein showed Jesus most love unto man's soul, and for that thing shall He be most loved again. His making is common to us and to all unreasonable creatures, for as He made us of might, so made He them; and therefore is this work greatest of might but not most of love. Also the buying is common to us and to all reasonable souls, as to Jews and Saracens and to false Christian men. For He died for all souls alike and bought them, if their

* Aretted and appropered—*i.e.*, ascribed and appropriated.

will have the perfect love of it. And also it sufficeth for the buying of all, though it be so that all have it not. And this work was most of wisdom, not most of love. But the righting and the hallowing of our souls through the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is only the working of love; and that is not common, but is special gift to chosen souls only. And soothly that is most working of love to us that are His chosen children.

This is the love of God that I spake of, which thou shouldest covet and desire; for this love is God Himself and the Holy Ghost. This love unformed, when it is given to us, worketh in our soul all that is good, and all that belongeth to goodness. This love loveth us ere that we love Him. For it cleanseth us first of our sins, and maketh us to love Him, and maketh our will strong to withstand all sins, and stirreth us to assay ourselves through divers exercises both bodily and ghostly in all virtues. It stirreth us to forsake the love and the liking of the world; it slayeth in us all wicked stirrings of sin and fleshly affections and worldly dreads; it keepeth us from malicious temptations of the fiend; and driveth us out from the business and vanity of the world and from conversation of worldly lovers. All this doth the love of God unformed when He giveth Himself to us. We do right naught but

suffer Him and assent to Him; for that is the most that we do, that we assent wilfully to His gracious working in us. And yet is not that will of us, but of His making, so that methinketh that He doth in us all that is well done, and yet we see it not. And not only doth He thus, but after this love doth more. For He openeth the eye of the soul and showeth to the soul the sight of Jesus wonderfully, and the knowing of Him, as the soul may suffer it thus by little and by little; and by that sight He ravisheth all the affection of the soul to Him.

And then beginneth the soul to know Him ghostly, and burningly to love Him. Then seeth the soul somewhat of the kind of the blessed godhead of Jesus, how that He is all and that He worketh all, and that all good deeds that are done and good thoughts are only of Him; for He is all sovereign might and all sovereign soothfastness and all sovereign goodness. And therefore every good deed is done of Him and by Him, and He only shall have the worship and the thanks for all good deeds, and nothing but He. For though wretched men steal His worship here for a while, nevertheless at the last end shall soothfastness show well that Jesus did all and that man did right naught of himself. And then shall thieves of God's good, that are not accorded with Him here in this life,

for their trespass be deemed to death, and Jesus shall be fully worshipped and thanked of all blessed creatures for His working. This love is naught else but Jesus Himself, that for love worketh all this in man's soul and reformeth it in feeling to His likeness as I have before said, and somewhat as I shall say. This love bringeth into the soul the fulhead of all virtues, and maketh him all clean and true, soft and easy, and turneth him into all love and into liking. And on what manner wise He doth that, I shall tell thee a little afterward. This love draweth the soul from vain beholding of worldly things into contemplation of ghostly creatures and of God's privities, from fleshlihead into ghostliness, from earthly feeling into heavenly savour.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW SOME SOULS LOVE JESUS BY BODILY FERVOURS, AND BY THEIR OWN MANLY AFFECTIONS THAT BE STIRRED BY GRACE AND BY REASON. AND HOW SOME LOVE JESUS MORE RESTFULLY, BY GHOSTLY AFFECTIONS ONLY, STIRRED INWARDLY THROUGH SPECIAL GRACE OF THE HOLY GHOST

THEN may I say that he that hath most of this love here in this life most pleaseth God,

and most clear sight shall have of Him and most fully love Him in the bliss of heaven: for he hath the most gift of love here in earth. This love may not be had by a man's own travail, as some ween. It is fully had of the gracious gift of Jesus, after much bodily and ghostly travail going before. For there are some lovers of God that make themselves to love God as it were by their own might; for they strain themselves through great violence and pant so strongly that they burst into bodily fervours as if they would draw down God from heaven to them. And they say in their hearts and with their mouth, "Ah, Lord, I love Thee, and I would love Thee. I would for this love suffer death." And in this manner of working they feel great fervour and much grace. And sooth it is, as methinketh, this working is good and meedful, if it be well tempered with meekness and with discretion. Nevertheless these men love not nor have not the gift of love on that manner as I speak of, nor they ask it not so. For a soul that hath the gift of love through gracious beholding of Jesus as I mean—or else if he have it not yet but would have it—he is not busy to strain himself over his might, as it were by bodily strength, to have it by bodily fervours and so to feel and love God. But he thinketh that he is right naught of himself

and that he can do right naught; but as it were a dead thing only, hanging and borne up by the mercy of God. He seeth well that Jesus is all and doth all, and therefore he asketh naught else but the gift of love. For since the soul seeth that his own love is naught, therefore it would have His love, for that is enough. Therefore prayeth he and that desireth he, that the love of God would touch him with His blessed light, that he might see a little of Him by His gracious presence, for then should he love Him. And so by this way cometh the gift of love that is God into a soul.

The more that a soul naughteth itself through grace by sight of this soothfastness —sometimes without any fervour outward showed—and the less it thinketh that it loveth or seeth God, the nearer it nigheth to perceive the gift of blessed love. For then is love master and worketh in the soul and maketh it forget itself, and see and behold only how love doth. And then is the soul more suffering than doing, and that is clean love. Thus Saint Paul meaned when he said: *All these that are wrought with the spirit of God, are God's sons.** That is, souls that are made so meek and so buxom to God that they work not of themselves but suffer the Holy Ghost to stir them and work in them

* Rom. viii 14.

the feelings of love with a full sweet accord to His stirrings, these are specially God's sons, most like unto Him.

Other souls that cannot love thus, but travail themselves by their own affections and stir themselves by their own thinking of God and bodily exercise to draw out of themselves by mastery the feeling of love by fervours and other bodily signs, love not ghostly. They do well and meedfully, if so be they will know meekly that their working is not the kindly gracious feeling of love, but is manly doing by a soul at the bidding of reason. And nevertheless through the goodness of God, because the soul doth what in it is, these manly affections of the soul, stirred unto God by man's workings, are turned into ghostly affections, and are meedful as if they had been done ghostly in the first beginning. And this is a great courtesy of our Lord showed to meek souls, that turneth all these manly affections of kindly love into the affection and into the meed of His own love; as if He had wrought them all fully by Himself. And so these manly affections so turned may be called affections of ghostly love through purchase, not through kindly bringing forth of the Holy Ghost. I say not that a soul may work such manly affections only of itself without grace; for I wot well that Saint Paul saith

that we may do right naught nor think aught that is good of ourselves without grace. *We that love God ween not that we suffice to love or to think good of ourselves only, but our sufficing is of God.** For God worketh in us all, both good will and good work, as Saint Paul saith: *It is God that worketh in us good will and fulfilling of good will.*† But I say that such affections are good, made by the will and mean of a soul after the general grace that He giveth to all chosen souls; not of special grace made ghostly by touching of His gracious presence as He worketh in His perfect lovers, as I said before. For in unperfect lovers love worketh farly by the affections of man; but in perfect lovers love worketh nearly by His own ghostly affections, and slayeth in a soul for the time all other affections both fleshly, kindly and manly. And that is properly the working of love by Himself. This love may be had a little in part here in a clean soul, through the ghostly sight of Jesus; but in the bliss of heaven it is fulfilled by clear sight in His godhead, for there shall none affections be felt in a soul but godly and ghostly.

* 2 Cor. iii 5. † Phil. ii 13.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THAT AMONG ALL OTHER GIFTS OF JESUS THE GIFT OF LOVE IS WORTHIEST AND MOST PROFITABLE. AND HOW JESUS DOTH ALL THAT IS WELL DONE IN HIS LOVERS ONLY FOR LOVE. AND HOW LOVE MAKETH THE USING OF ALL VIRTUES AND OF ALL GOOD DEEDS LIGHT AND EASY

Ask thou then of God nothing but this gift of love, that is, the Holy Ghost. For among all the gifts that our Lord giveth there is none so good nor so profitable, so worthy nor so excellent, as this is. For there is no gift of God that is both the giver and the gift but this gift of love; and therefore it is the best and the worthiest. The gift of prophecy, the gift of miracles-working, the gift of great knowing and counselling, and the gift of great fasting or of great penance-doing or any other such, are great gifts of the Holy Ghost; but they are not the Holy Ghost, for a reproved soul and a damnable might have all those gifts as well as a chosen soul. And therefore all these manner gifts are not greatly to desire nor much to charge.

But the gift of love is the Holy Ghost, God Himself; and Him may no soul have and be damned withal. For that gift only saveth it from damnation, and maketh it God's son,

perceiver* of heavenly heritage. And that love, as I have before said, is not the affection of love that is formed in a soul, but it is the Holy Ghost Himself, that is love unformed, that saveth a soul. For He giveth Himself to a soul first, ere yet the soul loveth Him; and He formeth the affection in the soul and maketh the soul to love Him only for Himself. And not only that, but also by this gift the soul loveth itself, and all his even-Christians as itself, only for God; and this is the gift of love that maketh division betwixt chosen souls and reproved. And this gift maketh full peace atwixt God and a soul and oneth all blessed creatures wholly in God; for it maketh Jesus to love us, and us Him also, and every one of us to love each other in Him.

Covet this gift of love principally as I have said. For if He will of His grace give it on that manner wise, it shall open and light the reason of thy soul to see soothfastness, that is God and ghostly things. And it shall stir thine affection wholly and fully to love Him, and it shall work in thy soul only as He will, and thou shalt behold Jesus reverently with softness of love and see how He doth. Thus biddeth He by His prophet that we should do, saying: *Cease ye, and see that I am God.*† That is, ye that are reformed in

* Perceiver—*i.e.*, heir.

† Ps. xlv 10.

feeling and have your inner eye opened into sight of ghostly things, cease ye sometime of outward working, and see that I am God. That is, see only how I, Jesus, God and man, do; behold ye Me, for I do all. I am love, and for love I do all that I do, and ye do naught. And I shall show you that this is sooth, for there is no good deed done by you, nor good thought felt in you, except it be done through Me, that is, through might and wisdom and love, mightily, wittily and lovely; else it is no good deed. But now is it sooth that I, Jesus, am both might, wisdom, and blessed love, and ye naught; for I am God. Then may ye well see that I do all your good deeds, and all your good thoughts and all your good loves in you, and ye do right naught. Nevertheless all these good deeds be called yours, not because ye work them principally, but because I give them you for love that I have to you. And therefore, seeing that I am Jesus, and for love do all this, cease then ye of the beholding of yourself and set yourself at naught, and look on Me and see that I am God, for I do all this. This is somewhat of the meaning of the verse of David before said.

See then and behold what love worketh in a chosen sou that He reformeth in feeling to His likeness, when the reason is lightened a little to the ghostly knowing of Jesus and

to the feeling of His love. Then bringeth love into the soul the fulhead of virtues, and turneth them all into softness and into liking, as it were without working of the soul; for the soul striveth not much for the getting of them as it did before, but it hath them easily and feeleth them restfully only through the gift of love that is the Holy Ghost. And that is a well great gladness and comfort unspeakable, when it feeleth suddenly—and wotteth never—how the virtue of meekness and patience, sobriety and sadness, chastity and cleanness, love to his even-Christians and all other virtues (the which were to him sometime travailous, painful and hard to keep) are now turned into softness and liking and into wonderful lightness; so far forth that he thinketh it no mastery nor no hardness to keep any virtue, but it is most liking for him to keep it. And all this maketh love.

Other men that stand in the common way of charity, and are not yet so far forth in grace, but work under the bidding of reason, they strive and fight all day against sins for the getting of virtues; and sometimes they be above and sometimes beneath, as wrestlers are. These men do full well. They have virtues in reason and will, not in savour nor in love, for they fight with themselves as it were by their own might for them; and therefore they may not have full rest nor fully the

higher hand. Nevertheless they shall have much meed, but they are not yet meek enough. They have not yet put themselves all fully in God's hand, for they see Him not yet. But a soul that hath ghostly sight of Jesus taketh no great keep of striving for virtues for that time. He is not busy about them specially, but he setteth all his business to keep that sight and that beholding of Jesus that it hath; to hold the mind stably thereto, and bind the love only to it that it fall not therefrom, and forgetteth all other things as much as it may. And when it doth this then is Jesus soothfastly master in the soul against all sins and beshadoweth it with His blessed presence and getteth it all virtues; and the soul is so comforted and borne up with the soft feeling of love that it hath of the sight of Jesus, that it feeleth no distress outward. And thus slayeth love generally all sins in a soul, and reformeth it in new feeling of virtues.

CHAPTER XXXVII

HOW LOVE, THROUGH GRACIOUS BEHOLDING OF JESUS, SLAYETH ALL STIRRINGS OF PRIDE, AND MAKETH THE SOUL TO LOSE SAVOUR AND DELIGHT IN ALL EARTHLY WORSHIP

NEVERTHELESS how love slayeth sins and reformeth virtues in a soul more specially shall I say; and first of pride, and of meekness that is contrary virtue thereto. Thou shalt understand that there is two manner of meekness. One is had by working of reason, another is felt of the special gift of love. Both are of love; the one love worketh by reason of the soul, but the other He worketh by Himself. The first is imperfect, that other is perfect.

The first meekness that a man feeleth of beholding of his own sins and of his own wretchedness, through the which beholding he thinketh himself unworthy to have any gift of grace or any mercy of God; but he thinketh it enough that He would of His great mercy grant him forgiveness of his sins. And also he thinketh that, because of his own sins, he is worse than the most sinner that liveth, and that every man doth better than he. And so by such beholding

thrusteth he himself down in his thought under all men; and he is busy to withstand the stirrings of pride as much as he may, both bodily pride and ghostly, and despiseth himself so that he assenteth not to the feelings of pride. And if his heart be taken sometime with it, that it be defiled with vain joy of worship, or of cunning or of praising or of any other thing, as soon as he may perceive it he is evil paid with himself, and hath sorrow for it in heart, and asketh forgiveness for it of God and showeth him to his confessor and accuseth himself meekly, and receiveth his penance. This is good meekness, but it is not yet perfect meekness, for it is of souls that are beginning and profiting in grace, caused of beholding of sins. Love worketh this meekness by reason of the soul.

Perfect meekness a soul feeleth of the sight and the ghostly knowing of Jesus. For when the Holy Ghost lighteneth the reason into the sight of soothfastness, how Jesus is all and doth all, the soul hath so great love and so great joy in that ghostly sight, for it is so soothfast, that it forgetteth itself and fully leaneth to Jesus with all the love that it hath to behold Him. It taketh no keep of unworthiness of itself nor of sins beforedone, but setteth itself at naught, with all the sins and all the good deeds that ever it did, as if there were nothing but Jesus. Thus meek

was David when he said thus: *Lord Jesus, the sight of Thy blessed unmade substance and Thine endless being showeth well unto me that my substance and the being of my soul is as naught anent Thee.** Also anent his even-Christians he hath no regard to them, nor deeming of them whether they be better or worse than he himself is. For he holdeth himself and all other men as it were even, alike naught of themselves anent God, whom he beholdeth as all. And therefore setteth he all other creatures at naught, as he doth himself. Thus meek was the prophet when he said thus: *All men are before the Lord as naught, and as unnoteful*† *and naught are they accounted to Him.*‡ That is, anent the endless being and the unchangeable kind of God, mankind is as naught. For of naught is it made, and to naught should it turn, unless He keep it in being that made it of naught. This is soothfastness, and this should make a soul meek if it might see through grace this soothfastness. Therefore, when love openeth the inner eye of the soul to see this soothfastness with other circumstances that come withal, then beginneth the soul to be soothfastly meek. For then, by the sight of God, it feeleth and seeth itself as it is; and

* Ps. xxxviii 5.
† Unnoteful—*i.e.*, needless.
‡ Isa. xl 17.

then forsaketh the soul the beholding and the leaning to itself, and fully falleth to the beholding of Jesus.

And when it doth so, then setteth the soul at naught all the joy and the worship of the world. For the joy of worldly worship is so little and so naught, in the regard of that joy and that love that it feeleth in the ghostly sight of Jesus and knowing of soothfastness, that though it might have it without any sin he would naught of it. For though men would worship him, praise him, favour him or set him at great state, it liketh him naught: nor though he had cunning of all the seven arts, of clergy, and of all crafts under the sun, or had the power to work all manner miracles, he hath no more dainty of all this nor no more savour of them than to gnaw on a dry stick. He had well liefer forget all this and be alone out of the sight of the world, than to think on them and to be worshipped of all men. For the heart of a true lover of Jesus is made so much and so large through a little sight of Him and a little feeling of His love, that all the liking and all the joy of all earth may not suffice to fill a corner of it. And then seemeth it well that these wretched worldly lovers—that are as it were ravished in love of their own worship, and pursue after it to have it with all their might and all their wit—have no savour in

this meekness, for they are wondrous far therefrom. But the lover of Jesus hath this meekness lastingly, and that not with heaviness and striving for it, but with liking and gladness: the which gladness he hath not because he forsaketh the worship of the world—for that were a proud meekness that belongeth to an hypocrite—but because he hath a sight and ghostly knowing of soothfastness and worthiness of Jesus through the gift of the Holy Ghost.

That reverent sight and that lovely beholding of Jesus comforteth the soul so wonderfully and beareth it up so mightily and so softly, that it may not like nor fully rest in any earthly joy, nor will it. He taketh no account whether men lack him or praise him, worship him or despise him, as for himself. He setteth it not at heart neither to be well paid if men despise him—as for more meekness—nor for to be evil paid that men should worship him or praise him. He had liefer to forget both that one and that other, and think only on Jesus, and get meekness that way; and that is much the more secure way for whoso might come thereto. Thus did David when he said: *Mine eyes are ever open to Jesus our Lord, for why, He shall pluck my feet from snares of sins.** For when he doth so, then forsaketh he utterly himself and

* Ps. xxiv 15.

undercasteth him wholly to Jesus. And then is he in a secure ward, for the shield of soothfastness which he holdeth keepeth him so well that he shall not be hurt through no stirring of pride as long as he holdeth him within the shield, as the prophet saith: *Soothfastness shall unbeclip* thee with a shield*, and that is if thou, all other things being left, behold Him only. For then *thou shalt not dread for the night's dread*, that is, thou shalt not dread the spirit of pride, whether he come by night or by day, as the next verse saith after this: *from the arrow flying in the day*.† Pride cometh by night to assail a soul when it is despised and reproved of other men, that it should, by that, fall into heaviness and sorrow. It cometh also as an arrow flying in the day, when a man is worshipped and praised of all men, whether it be for worldly doing or for ghostly, that he should have vain joy in himself restingly and false gladness in a passing thing. This is a sharp arrow and a perilous; it flieth swiftly, it striketh softly, but it woundeth deadly. But the lover of Jesus, that stably beholdeth Him by devout prayers and busy thinking on Him, is so belapped with the secure shield of soothfastness that He dreadeth not, for this arrow may not enter into the soul.

* Unbeclip—*i.e.*, surround, *cf.* Latin *circumdabit*.
† Ps. xc 5, 6.

For though it come it hurteth not, but glinteth away and passeth forth. And thus is the soul made meek as I understand, by the working of the Holy Ghost that is the gift of love. For He openeth the eye of the soul to see the love of Jesus, and He keepeth the soul in that sight restfully and securely, and He slayeth all the stirrings of pride wonderfully and privily and softly, and the soul wots never how. And also He bringeth in by that way soothfastly and lovely the virtue of meekness. All this doth love, but not in all His lovers alike full. For some have this grace but shortly and little, as it were in the beginning of it, and a little assaying towards; for their conscience is not yet cleansed fully through grace. And some have it more fully, for they have clearer sight of Jesus, and they feel more of His love. And some have it most fully, for they have the full gift of contemplation. Nevertheless he that least hath on this manner as I have said, I hope soothly he hath the gift of perfect meekness, for he hath the gift of perfect love.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW LOVE SLAYETH ALL STIRRINGS OF WRATH AND ENVY SOFTLY, AND REFORMETH IN THE SOUL THE VIRTUES OF PEACE AND PATIENCE AND OF PERFECT CHARITY TO HIS EVEN-CHRISTIAN, AS HE DID SPECIALLY IN THE APOSTLES

LOVE worketh wisely and softly in a soul where He will, for He slayeth mightily ire and envy and all passions of angriness and melancholy in it, and bringeth into the soul virtues of patience and mildness, peaceability and love to his even-Christians. It is full hard and great mastery to a man that standeth only in working of his own reason to keep patience, holy rest and softness in heart, and charity to his even-Christians, if they dis-ease him unskilfully and do him wrong, that he shall not somewhat do again to them through stirring of ire or of melancholy, either in speaking or in working or in both. Nevertheless though a man be stirred and troubled in himself and made unrestful, so that it be not too much passing over the bounds of reason, and that he keep his hand and his tongue and be ready to forgive the trespass when mercy is asked, yet this man hath the virtue of patience,

though it be but weak and nakedly; forasmuch as he would have it, and travaileth busily in refraining of his unskilful passions that he might have it, and also is sorry that he hath it not as he should. But to a true lover of Jesus it is no great mastery to suffer all this, for why, love fighteth for him, and slayeth wonder softly such stirrings of wrath and of melancholy, and maketh his soul so easy and so peaceable, so suffering and so godly—through the ghostly sight of Jesus with the feeling of His blessed love—that though he be despised and reproved of other men, or take wrong or harm, shame or villainy, he chargeth it not. He is not much stirred against them, he will not be angered nor stirred against them; for if he were much stirred he should forbear the comfort that he feeleth within his soul, but that will he not. He may lightlier forget all the wrong that is done to him, than another may forgive it though mercy were asked. And so he had well liefer forget it; for he thinketh it most ease to him.

And love doth all this, for love openeth the eyes of the soul to the sight of Jesus, stableth it with the liking of love that it feeleth by that sight, and comforteth it so mightily that it taketh no heed; whatsoever men jangle or do against him it hangeth nothing upon them. The most harm that

he might have were a forbearing of the ghostly sight of Jesus. And therefore it is liefer to him to suffer all harms than that alone. All this may the soul do well and easily without great troubling of the ghostly sight, when dis-ease falleth all without forth and toucheth not the body: as is backbiting and scorning or spoiling of such as he hath. All this grieveth not. But it goeth somewhat nearer when the flesh is touched and he feeleth smart; then is it harder. Nevertheless though it be hard and impossible to the frail kind of man to suffer bodily penance gladly and patiently, without bitter stirrings of ire, anger and melancholy, it is not impossible to love—that is the Holy Ghost —to work this in a soul where He toucheth with the blessed gift of love. But He giveth a soul that is in that plight mighty feelings of love, and wonderfully fasteneth it to Jesus, and departeth it wonderfully far from the sensuality through His privy might, and comforteth it so sweetly by His blessed presence that the soul feeleth little pain or else none of the sensuality; and this is a special grace given to the holy martyrs.

This grace had the apostles, as Holy Writ saith of them thus: *The apostles came joying from the counsel of the Jews, when they were beaten with scourges, and they were glad that they were worthy to suffer any bodily dis-ease*

*for the love of Jesus.** They were not stirred to ire nor to felness, to be avenged on the Jews that beat them; as a worldly man would be when he suffered a little harm—be it never so little—of his even-Christians. Nor were they stirred to pride, nor to highness of themselves, nor to disdain and to deeming of the Jews, as hypocrites and heretics are, that will suffer much bodily pain, and are sometimes ready to suffer death with great gladness and with mighty will, as it were in the name of Jesus and for love of Him. Soothly that love and that gladness that they have in suffering of bodily mischief is not of the Holy Ghost; it cometh not from the fire that burneth in the high altar of heaven, but it is feigned by the fiend enflamed of hell. For it is fully mixed with the height of pride and the presumption of themselves, and despite and deeming and disdain of them that thus punish them. They ween that all this is charity, and that they suffer all that for the love of God, but they are beguiled of the midday fiend. A true lover of Jesus, when he suffereth harm of his even-Christian, is so strengthened of the Holy Ghost, and is made so meek, so patient, so peaceable, and that soothfastly, that what wrong or harm it be that he suffer of his even-Christian he keepeth ever meekness. He despiseth him

* Acts v 41.

not, he deemeth him not, but he prayeth for him in his heart and hath of him pity and compassion, much more tenderly than of another man that never did him harm; and soothly better loveth him, and more fervently desireth the salvation of his soul, because he seeth that he shall have so much ghostly profit of the evil deed of that other man, though it be against his will. But this love and this meekness worketh only the Holy Ghost, above the kind of man, in them that He maketh the true lovers of Jesus.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HOW LOVE SLAYETH COVETOUSNESS, LECHERY AND GLUTTONY, AND SLAYETH THE FLESHLY SAVOUR AND DELIGHT IN ALL THE BODILY WITS, SOFTLY AND EASILY, THROUGH A GRACIOUS BEHOLDING OF JESUS

COVETOUSNESS also is slain in a soul by the working of love, for it maketh the soul so covetous of ghostly good, and to heavenly riches so ardent, that it setteth right naught by all earthly things. It hath no more dainty in having of a precious stone than of a chalk stone; nor no more love hath he in a hundred pound of gold than in a pound of lead. It setteth all things that shall perish at one price, nor chargeth that one more than that other

as in his love. For it seemeth well that all these earthly things—that worldly men set so great price upon and love so daintily—should pass away and turn to naught, both the thing in itself and the love of it. And therefore he bringeth it in his thought betimes into the plight that it shall be in after, and so accounteth it as naught. And when worldly lovers strive and fight and plead for earthly good, who may first have it, the lover of Jesus striveth with no man, but keepeth himself in peace and holdeth him paid with that that he hath, and will strive for no more; for he thinketh that he needeth no more of all the riches in earth than a scant bodily sustenance to save the bodily life withal, as long as God will: and that he may lightly have. And therefore will he have no more than scantily he needeth for the time, that he may freely be discharged from business about the keeping and the dispending of it, and fully give his heart and his business about the seeking of Jesus, to find Him in cleanness of spirit. For that is all his covetousness, for why, only the clean of heart shall see Him. Also fleshly love of father and mother and other worldly friends hangeth not upon him; it is even cut from his heart with the sword of ghostly love, that he hath no more affection to father or mother or to any worldly friend than he hath to

another man, unless he see or feel in him more grace or more virtue than in other men. Save only this, that he had liefer his father and mother had the same grace that some other men have; but nevertheless if they be not so, then loveth he other men better than them, and that is charity. And so God's love slayeth covetousness of the world, and bringeth poverty in spirit into the soul. And that doth love not only in them that have right naught of worldly goods, but also in some creatures that are in great worldly state and have dispending of earthly riches. Love slayeth in some of them covetousness so far forth that they have no more liking nor savour in having of them than of a straw. Nor though they be lost, for default of them that should keep them, they set naught thereby; for why, the heart of God's lover, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, is taken so fully with the sight and the love of another thing, that is Jesus: and that is so precious and so worthy, that it will receive none other love restingly that is contrary thereto. And not only doth love this, but also it slayeth the liking of lechery and all other bodily uncleanness, and bringeth into the soul very chastity, and turneth it into liking. For the soul feeleth so great delight in the sight of Jesus that it liketh to be chaste, and it is no great hardness to it to keep chastity,

for it is so most easy and most at rest. And upon the same wise the gift of love slayeth lusts of gluttony and maketh the soul sober and temperate, and beareth it up so mightily that it may not rest in liking of meat and drink, but it taketh meat and drink, what it be that least grieveth the bodily complexion, if it may lightly come thereto; not for love of itself but for the love of God. On this manner wise the lover of God seeth well that he needeth to keep his bodily life with meat and drink as long as God will suffer them to be together.

Then shall this be the discretion of the lover of Jesus, as I understand, that hath feeling and working in the love; that upon what manner that he may most keep His grace whole and least be letted from working in it through taking of bodily sustenance, so shall he do. That manner of meat that least letteth and least troubleth the heart, and may keep the body in strength—be it flesh, be it fish, be it bread or ale—I trow the soul chooseth to have it, if it may come thereby. For all the business of the soul is to think on Jesus with reverent love ever, without letting of anything, if it might. And therefore, since it must needs somewhat be letted and hindered, the less it is letted and hindered by meat and drink or any other thing the liefer it is. It had liefer use the

best meat and most of price under the sun, if it less letted the keeping of his heart, than to take bread and water if it letted him more; for he hath no regard to get him great meed for the pain of fasting and be put thereby from softness in heart, but all his business is to keep his heart as stably as he may in the sight of Jesus and in the feeling of His love. And soothly as I trow, he might with less liking use the best meat that is good in its own kind, than another man that worketh all in reason without the special gift of love should more use the worst, save only meat that through craft of curiosity is only made for lust. That manner of meat may he not well accord withal. And also on that other side, if little meat, as only bread and ale, most helpeth and easeth his heart and keepeth it most in peace, it is most lief then to him to use it so: and namely if he feel bodily strength only of the gift of love withal. And yet doth love more, for it slayeth accidie and fleshly idleness, and maketh the soul lively and speedy to the service of Jesus; so far forth that it coveteth ever to be occupied in goodness, and in inward beholding of Him by the virtue of which the soul hath savour and ghostly delight in praying and thinking, and in all other manner of doing that needeth to be done after the state that he is in, without heaviness or painful bitterness, whether he

be religious or secular. Also it slayeth the vain liking of the five bodily wits. First the sight of the eye, that the soul hath no liking in the sight of any worldly thing; but it feeleth rather pain and dis-ease in beholding of it, be it never so fair, never so precious, never so wonderful. And therefore as worldly lovers run out sometimes to see new things, to wonder on them, and so to feed their heart with the vain sight of them; right so a lover of Jesus is ready to run away and withdraw him from the sight of such manner things, that the inner sight be not letted, for he seeth ghostly another manner thing that is fairer and more wonderful, and that would he not forbear.

Right on the same wise is it of speaking and hearing. It is a pain to the soul of a lover of Jesus to speak or to hear anything that might let the freedom of his heart to think on Jesus. What song or melody or minstrelsy outward that it be, if it let the thought that it may not freely and restfully pray or think on Him, it liketh him right naught; and the more delectable it is to other men the more unsavoury it is to him. And also to hear any manner of speaking of other men—unless it be somewhat touching the working of his soul in the love of Jesus—it liketh him right naught; he is else right soon irked of it. He had well liefer be in peace

and hear right naught nor speak right naught, than to hear the speaking and the teaching of the greatest clerk of earth, with all the reasons that he can say to him through man's wits, unless he can speak feelingly and stirringly of the love of Jesus; for that is his craft principally. And therefore would he naught else speak, hear nor see, but what might help him and further him into more knowing and to better feeling of Him. Of worldly speech it is no doubt that he hath no savour in speaking nor in hearing of it, nor in worldly tales nor in tidings, nor in none such vain jangling that belongeth not to Him. And so it is of smelling and savouring. The more that the thought should be distracted and broken from ghostly rest by the use either of smelling or savouring or of any of the bodily wits, the more he fleeth it. The less he feeleth of them, the liefer it is to him; and if he might live in the body without the feeling of any of them, he would never feel them. For they trouble the heart oft-times and put it from rest, and they may not fully be eschewed. Nevertheless the love of Jesus is sometimes so mighty in a soul that it overcometh and slayeth all that is contrary thereto for a time.

CHAPTER XL

WHAT VIRTUES AND GRACES A SOUL RECEIVETH THROUGH OPENING OF THE INNER EYE UNTO THE GRACIOUS BEHOLDING OF JESUS; AND HOW IT MAY NOT BE GOT THROUGH MAN'S TRAVAIL ONLY BUT THROUGH SPECIAL GRACE AND TRAVAIL ALSO

THUS worketh love in a soul, opening the ghostly eye into beholding of Jesus by inspiration of special grace, and maketh it clean, subtle and able to the work of contemplation. What this opening of the ghostly eye is the greatest clerk on earth cannot imagine by his wit, nor show fully by his tongue. For it may not be got by study nor through man's travail only, but principally by grace of the Holy Ghost and with travail of man. I dread much to speak aught of it, for methinketh I cannot; it passeth mine assay, and my lips are unclean. Nevertheless, because I think that love asketh and love biddeth, therefore I shall say a little more of it as I think love teacheth. This opening of the ghostly eye is that lightsome darkness and rich naught that I spake of before, and it may be called purity of spirit and ghostly rest, inward stillness and peace of conscience, highness of thought and onl-iness of soul, a

lively feeling of grace and purity of heart, the waking sleep of the spouse and tasting of heavenly savour, burning in love and shining in light, entry of contemplation and reforming in feeling. All these reasons are said in Holy Writ by divers men, for each of them spake of it after his feeling in grace. And though all these be divers in the showing of words, nevertheless they are all one in sentence of soothfastness.

For a soul that through visiting of grace hath one, hath all; for why, a soul sighing to see the face of Jesus, when it is touched through special grace of the Holy Ghost, is suddenly changed and turned from the plight that it was in to another manner of feeling. It is wonderfully departed and drawn first into itself from the love and the liking of all worldly thing; so much that it hath lost the savour of the bodily life and of all thing that is, save only Jesus. And then it is clean from all the filth of sin, so far forth that the mind of it and all unordained affection of any creature is suddenly washed and wiped away, that there is no mean letting betwixt Jesus and the soul, but only the bodily life. And then it is in ghostly rest; for why, all painful doubts and dreads and all other temptations of ghostly enemies are driven out of the heart, that they trouble not nor sink therein for the time. It is in rest from

the noise of worldly business and painful tarryings of wicked stirrings; but it is full busy in the free ghostly working of love. And the more it travaileth so, the more rest he feeleth. This restful travail is full far from fleshly idleness and from blind security. It is full of ghostly work; but it is called rest, because grace looseth the heavy yoke of fleshly love from the soul, and maketh it mighty and free through the gift of ghostly love, to work gladly, softly and delectably in all things that grace stirreth it to work in. And therefore it is called a holy idleness and a rest most busy; and so is it in inwardness from the great crying of the beastly noise of fleshly desires and unclean thoughts.

This stillness maketh inspiration of the Holy Ghost in beholding of Jesus. For why, His voice is so sweet and so mighty that it putteth to silence in a soul all jangling of other speakers; for it is a voice of virtue, softly sounded in a soul, of the which the prophet saith thus: *The voice of our Lord Jesus is in virtue.** This voice is a lively word and a speedy, as the apostle saith: *Quick is the word of Jesus and speedy, more piercing than any sword is.*† Through speaking of this word is fleshly love slain, and the soul kept in silence from all wicked stirrings. Of this silence it is said in the Apocalypse

* Ps. xxviii 4. † Heb. iv 12.

thus: *Silence was made in heaven as it were an half hour.** Heaven is a clean soul, through grace lifted up from earthly love to heavenly conversation, so that it is in silence; but forasmuch as that silence may not last whole continually for corruption of the bodily kind, therefore it is likened to the time of half an hour. A full short time the soul thinketh it is, be it never so long; and therefore it is but half an hour. And then hath it peace in conscience; for why, grace putteth out gnawing, pricking, stirring and fliting† of sins, and bringeth in peace and accord, and maketh Jesus and a soul both one in full accordance of will. There is none upbraiding of sins nor sharp reproving of defaults made at that time in a soul, for they have kissed and made friends and all is forgiven that was misdone.

Thus feeleth the soul with full meek likeness and great ghostly gladness, and it conceiveth a full great boldness of salvation by this accord-making, for it heareth a privy witnessing in conscience of the Holy Ghost, that it is a chosen son to a heavenly heritage. Thus Saint Paul saith: *The Holy Ghost beareth witness to our spirit that we are God's sons.*‡ This witnessing of conscience,

* Apoc. viii 1.
† Fliting—*i.e.*, contention, scolding.
‡ Rom. viii 16.

soothfastly felt through grace, is the very joy of the soul, as the apostle saith: *My joy is the witness of my conscience*,* and that is when it witnesseth peace and accord, true love and friendship betwixt Jesus and a soul. And when it is in this peace, then it is in highness of thought.

When the soul is bound with love of the world, then is it beneath all creatures; for everything overgoeth it and beareth it down by mastery, that it may not see Jesus nor love Him. For right as the love of the world is vain and fleshly, right so the beholding and thinking and the using of all creatures is fleshly; and that is a thraldom of the soul. But then, through opening of the ghostly eye into Jesus, the love is turned and the soul is raised up after his own kind above all bodily creatures; and then the beholding and thinking and the using of them is ghostly, for the love is ghostly. The soul hath then full great disdain to be buxom to love of worldly things; for it is high set above them through grace. It setteth naught by all the world, for why, all shall pass and perish. Unto this highness of heart, while the soul is kept therein, cometh none error nor deceit of the fiend, for Jesus is soothfastly in sight of the soul at that time and all things are beneath Him. Of this the prophet speaketh thus:

* 2 Cor. i 12.

*Come man to high heart and God shall be highed.** That is, a man that through grace cometh to the highness of thought, shall see that Jesus only is highed above all creatures and he in Him.

And then is the soul alone, much estranged from friendship of worldly lovers, though her body be in the midst among them; full far departed from fleshly affections of creatures. It careth not though it never see man, nor speak with him, nor have comfort of him, if it might ever be so in that ghostly feeling. It feeleth so great homeliness of the blessed presence of our Lord Jesus, and so much savour of Him, that it may lightly for His love forget the fleshly mind of all creatures. I say not that it shall not love nor think of other creatures, but I say that it shall think on them in time, and see them and love them ghostly and freely, not fleshly and painfully as it did before. Of this onli-ness† speaketh the prophet thus: *I shall lead her into onli-stead and I shall speak to her heart.*‡ That is: grace of Christ leadeth a soul from the noisome company of fleshly desires into onliness of thought, and maketh it forget the liking of the world, and soundeth by sweetness of His inspiration words of love in ears

* Ps. lxiii 6, 7.
† Onli-ness—*i.e.*, solitude.
‡ Osee ii 14.

of the heart. Only is a soul when it loveth Jesus and attendeth fully to Him, and hath lost the savour and the comfort of the world. And that it might better keep this onli-ness it fleeth the company of all men if it may, and seeketh onli-ness of body: for that much helpeth to onli-ness of the soul and to the free working of love. The less letting that it hath without of vain jangling, or within of vain thinking, the more free it is in ghostly beholding, and so it is in privity of heart.

All without is a soul whilst it is overlaid and blinded with worldly love. It is as common as an highway, for every stirring that cometh of the flesh or of the fiend sinketh in, and goeth through it. But then through grace it is drawn into the privy chamber into the sight of our Lord Jesus, and heareth His privy counsel and is wonderfully comforted in the hearing. Of this speaketh the prophet thus: *My privity to me, my privity to me.** That is: the lover of Jesus, through inspiration of grace taken up from outward feeling of worldly love and ravished into the privity of ghostly love, yielded liking to Him, saying thus: *My privity to me.* That is, my Lord Jesus, Thy privity is showed to me and privily hid from all lovers of the world, for it is called hid manna, that may lightlier be asked than told what it is. And that our Lord

* Isa. xxiv 16.

promiseth to His lovers, saying thus: *I shall give manna hid, that no man knoweth but he that tasteth it.** This manna is heavenly meat and angels food, as Holy Writ saith. For angels are fully fed and filled with clear sight in burning love of our Lord Jesus, and that is manna. For we may ask what it is, but we wit not what it is. But the lover of Jesus is not filled as yet here, but he is fed by a little tasting of it whilst he is bound in this bodily life.

The tasting of this manna is a lively feeling of grace, had through opening of the ghostly eye. And this grace is not another grace than that which a chosen soul feeleth in the beginning of his conversion; but it is the same and the self grace, albeit it is otherwise felt and showed to a soul. For why, grace waxeth with a soul and the soul waxeth with grace. And the more clean that the soul is, far departed from love of the world, the more mighty is the grace, more inward and more ghostly showing in the presence of our Lord Jesus. So that the same grace that turneth them first from sin and maketh them to begin and to profit by gifts of virtue and exercise of good works, maketh them also perfect; and that grace is called a lively feeling of grace, for he that hath it feeleth well by experience that he is in grace. It

* Apoc. ii 17.

is full lively to him, for it quickeneth the soul wonderfully and maketh it so whole that it feeleth no painful disease of the body, though it be feeble and sickly. For why, then is the body mightiest, most whole, and most restful, and the soul also.

Without this grace the soul cannot live but in pain, for it thinketh that it might ever keep it and nothing should put it away. And nevertheless yet it is not so, for it passeth away full lightly. But nevertheless, though the sovereign feeling pass away and withdraw, the relic liveth still and keepeth the soul in sadness, and maketh it to desire the coming again. And this is also the waking sleep of the spouse, of the which Holy Writ saith thus: *I sleep and my heart waketh.** That is, I sleep ghostly, when through grace the love of the world is slain in me, and wicked stirrings and fleshly desires are dead so much that I scarcely feel them. I am not tarried with them, my heart is made free. And then it waketh, for it is sharp and ready to love Jesus and see Him. The more I sleep from outward things, the more wakeful I am in knowing of Jesus and of inward things. I may not wake to Jesus unless I sleep to the world. And therefore—the grace of the Holy Ghost shutting the fleshly eyes—the soul doth sleep from worldly

* Cant. v 2.

vanity, and opening the ghostly eye waketh into the sight of God's majesty hid under the cloud of His precious manhood. As the Gospel saith of the apostles when they were with our Lord Jesus in His transfiguration, first they slept and then *waking they saw His majesty*.* By this sleep of the apostles is understood dying of worldly love through inspiration of the Holy Ghost; by their wakening, contemplation of Jesus. Through this sleep the soul is brought into rest from noise of fleshly lust; and through wakening it is raised up into the sight of Jesus and ghostly things. The more that the eyes are closed in this manner of sleep from the appetite of earthly things, the sharper is the inner sight in lovely beholding of heavenly fairhead. This sleeping and this waking love worketh through the light of grace in the soul of the lover of our Lord Jesus.

* Luke ix 32.

CHAPTER XLI

HOW SPECIAL GRACE IN BEHOLDING OF OUR LORD JESUS WITHDRAWETH SOMETIMES FROM A SOUL. AND HOW A SOUL SHALL BEHAVE HER IN THE ABSENCE AND PRESENCE OF JESUS. AND HOW A SOUL SHALL DESIRE THAT THE GRACIOUS PRESENCE OF JESUS SHALL BE IN IT ALWAYS

SHOW me then a soul that, through inspiration of grace, hath opening of the ghostly sight into beholding of Jesus; that is departed and drawn out from the love of the world, so far forth that it hath purity and poverty of spirit, ghostly rest, inward silence and peace in conscience, highness of thought, onli-ness and privity of heart, wakeful sleep of the spouse; that hath lost liking and joy of the world and is taken with delight of heavenly savour, ever thirsting and softly seeking the blessed presence of Jesus; and I dare hardily pronounce that this soul burneth all in love and shineth in ghostly light, worthy to come to the name and to the worship of the spouse, for it is reformed in feeling, made able and ready to contemplation. These are the tokens of inspiration in opening of the ghostly eye. For why, when the eye is opened, the soul is in full feeling of all these virtues

beforesaid for that time. Nevertheless it falleth oftentimes that grace withdraweth in part, through corruption of man's frailty, and suffereth then the soul to fall into itself in fleshlihead, as it was before; and then is the soul in pain and in sorrow, for it is blind and unsavoury and can do no good. It is weak and unmighty, encumbered with the body and with all the bodily wits; it seeketh and desireth after the grace of Jesus again and may not find it. For Holy Writ saith of our Lord thus: *After when our Lord Jesus hath hid His face, there is none that may behold Him.** When He showeth Him, the soul may not unsee Him for He is light; and when He hideth Him it may not see Him, for the soul is dark. His hiding is but a subtle assaying of the soul, His showing is wondrous merciful goodness in comfort of the soul.

Have ye no wonder though the feeling of grace be withdrawn sometimes from a lover of Jesus. For Holy Writ saith the same of the spouse that she fareth thus: *I sought and I found Him not : I called and He answered not.*† That is, when I fall down to my frailty then grace withdraweth, for my falling is cause thereof and not His fleeing. But then feel I pain of my wretchedness in His absence, and therefore I sought Him by great desire of heart, and He gave me no

* Job xxxiv 29. † Cant. iii 1.

feelable answering. And then I cried with all my soul: *Turn again, Thou my loved.** And yet it seemed as He heard me not. The painful feeling of myself and the assailing of fleshly loves and dreads in this time, and the wanting of my ghostly strength is a continual crying of my soul to Jesus. And nevertheless our Lord maketh strange and cometh not, cry I never so fast. For He is sure enough of His lover that he will not turn again to worldly love fully nor may no savour have therein, and therefore abideth He the longer. But at the last, when He will, He cometh again, full of grace and of soothfastness, and visiteth the soul that languisheth in desire by sighings of love to His presence, and toucheth it and anointeth it full softly with the oil of gladness and maketh it suddenly whole from all pain; and then crieth the soul to Jesus in ghostly voice with a glad heart thus: *Oil poured out is Thy name.*† Thy name is Jesus, and that is health.

Then as long as I feel my soul sore and sick for sin, pained with the heavy burden of my body, sorry and dreading for perils and wretchedness of this life, so long Lord Jesus Thy name is oil shut up, not oil poured out to me. But when I feel my soul suddenly touched with the light of Thy grace, healed and softened from all the filth of sin, and

* Cant. ii 17. † Cant. i 2.

comforted in love and in light with ghostly strength and gladness unspeakable, then may I say with joyful lauding and ghostly mirth to Thee; *Oil poured out is Thy name*, Jesus, to me. For by the effect of thy gracious visiting I feel well of Thy name the true expounding, that Thou art Jesus, health. For only Thy gracious presence healeth me from sorrow and from sin. Blessed is that soul that is ever fed in feeling of love in His presence, or is borne up by desire to Him in His absence. A wise lover is he and well taught that sadly and reverently hath him in His presence, and lovely beholdeth Him without dissolute lightness, and patiently and easily beareth him in His absence without venomous despair and over painful bitterness.

This changeability of absence and presence of Jesus that a soul feeleth is not perfection of the soul, nor is it not against the grace of perfection or of contemplation; but in so much perfection is the less. For the more letting that a soul hath of itself from continual feeling of grace, the less is the grace; and yet nevertheless is the grace in itself grace of contemplation. This changeability of absence and presence falleth as well in the state of perfection as in state of beginning, but in another manner. For right as there is diversity of feeling in the presence of grace

betwixt these two states, right so is there in the absence of grace. And therefore he that knoweth not the absence of grace is ready to be deceived; and he that observeth not the presence of grace is unkind to the visiting, whether he is in the state of beginners or perfect. Nevertheless the more stableness that there is in grace, unhurt and unbroken, the lovelier is the soul and the more like unto Him in whom is no changeability, as the apostle saith. And it is full seemly that the soul-spouse be like to Jesu-spouse in manners and in virtue, full according to Him in stableness of perfect love. But that falleth seldom here, except in the special spouse.

For he that perceiveth no changeability in feeling of his grace, but is ever alike whole and stable, unbroken and unhurt as he thinketh, he is either full perfect or full blind. He is perfect that is sequestered from all fleshly affections and communing of all creatures, and all means of corruption and of sin are broken away betwixt Jesus and his soul, fully oned to Him with softness of love. But this is only grace above man's kind. He is full blind that feigneth him in grace without ghostly feeling of God's inspiration, and setteth himself in a manner of stableness as he were ever in feeling and in working of special grace, deeming that all is grace that he doth and feeleth without and within,

thinking that whatsoever he do or speak is grace, holding himself unchangeable in speciality of grace. If there be any such—as I hope there be none—he is full blind in feeling of grace.

But then might thou say thus: that we should live only in troth and not covet ghostly feelings nor regard them if they come. For the apostle saith: *The righteous man liveth in troth.** Unto this I say that bodily feelings, be they never so comfortable, we shall not covet, nor regard them much if they come. But ghostly feelings such as I speak of, if they come in the manner that I have said before, we should ever desire; the which are slaying of all worldly love, opening of the ghostly eye, purity of spirit, peace of conscience, and all other beforesaid. We should covet to feel ever the lively inspiration of grace made by the ghostly presence of Jesus in our soul, if we might; and to have Him in our sight with reverence, and ever feel the sweetness of His love by a wonderful homeliness of His presence. This should be our life and our feeling in grace, after the measure of His gift in whom all grace is, to some more and to some less; for His presence is felt in divers wise as He vouchsafeth. And in this we should live, and work what belongeth for us to work; for

* Heb. x 13.

without this we should not ken how to live. For right as the soul is the life of the body, right so is Jesus the life of the soul by His gracious presence. And nevertheless this manner of feeling, be it never so much, is yet but troth as in regard of that that shall be of the self same Jesus in the bliss of heaven.

Lo, this feeling should we desire, for every reasonable soul ought with all its mights to covet nighing to Jesus and oneing to Him, through feeling of His gracious unseeable presence. How that presence is felt it may better be known by experience than by any writing; for it is the life and the love, the might and the light, the joy and the rest of a chosen soul. And therefore he that hath once soothfastly felt it, he may not forbear it without pain; he may not undesire it, it is so good in itself and so comfortable. What is more comfortable to a soul here than to be drawn out, through grace, from the vile noise of worldly business and filth of desires, and from vain affection of all creatures, into rest and softness of ghostly love; privily perceiving the gracious presence of Jesus, feelably fed with the savour of His unseeable blessed face? Soothly nothing, methinketh. Nothing may make the soul of a lover full of mirth but the gracious presence of Jesus, as He can show Him to a clean soul. He is never heavy, never sorry, but when he is

with himself in fleshliness; he is never full glad nor merry except when he is out of himself, as he was with Jesus in his ghostliness. And yet is that no full mirth, for ever there hangeth an heavy lump of bodily corruption on his soul, and beareth it down and much letteth the ghostly gladness, and that must ever be whiles he is here in this life. But nevertheless—for I speak of changeability of grace, how it cometh and goeth, that thou mistake it not—therefore I mean not of the common grace that is had and is felt in troth and in good will to God, without having which and lasting therein no man may be saved, for it is in the least soul that liveth; but I mean the special grace felt by inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the manner as it is beforesaid. The common grace lasteth whole whatsoever a man do, as long as his will and his intent is true to God, that he would not sin deadly, or the deed that he wilfully doth is not forbid as deadly sin, for this grace is not lost save through deadly sin. And then is it deadly sin, when his conscience witnesseth with advisement that it is deadly sin and yet nevertheless he doth it; or else his conscience is so blinded that he beholdeth it no deadly sin, although he do the deed wilfully which is forbidden of God and Holy Church as deadly sin.

Special grace felt through the unseeable

presence of Jesus, that maketh a soul a perfect lover, lasteth not ever alike whole in the highness of feeling, but changeably cometh and goeth as I have said before. Thus our Lord saith: *The Holy Ghost spireth* where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou wottest not whence He cometh nor whither He goeth.*† He cometh sometimes privily when thou art least aware of Him, but thou shalt full well know Him ere He go; for wonderfully He stirreth and mightily turneth thine heart into beholding of His goodness, and doth melt thine heart delectably, as wax against the fire, into softness of His love, and this is the voice that He soundeth. But then He goeth ere thou wit it. For He withdraweth Himself somewhat, not in all, but from excess into sobriety; the highness passeth, but the substance and the effect of grace dwelleth still. And that is as long as the soul of a lover keepeth him clean, and falleth not wilfully to recklessness or dissolution in fleshliness, nor to outward vanity; as sometimes it doth, though it have no delight therein, for frailty of itself. Of this changeability in grace speak I now.

* Spireth—*i.e.*, breathes.
† John iii 8.

CHAPTER XLII

A COMMENDATION OF PRAYER OFFERED TO JESUS BY A CONTEMPLATIVE SOUL. AND HOW STABLENESS IN PRAYER IS A SECURE WORK TO STAND IN. AND HOW EVERY FEELING OF GRACE IN A CHOSEN SOUL MAY BE CALLED JESUS, BUT THE MORE CLEANER THE SOUL IS, THE WORTHIER IS THE GRACE

THE soul of man, while it is not touched with special grace, is blunt and boisterous to ghostly work, and can naught therein. It may not thereof for weakness of itself; it is both cold and dry, undevout and unsavoury in itself. But then cometh the light of grace, and through touching maketh it sharp and subtle, ready and able to ghostly work, and giveth it a great freedom and an whole readiness in will to be buxom to all the stirring of grace, ready to work after that grace stirreth the soul. For by opening of the ghostly eye it is applied all fully to grace, ready to pray. And how the soul prayeth then shall I tell thee.

The most special prayer that the soul useth and hath most comfort in I trow is the *Pater noster*, or else psalms of the psalter; the *Pater noster* for lewd men, and psalms and hymns and other service of Holy Church

for lettered men. The soul prayeth then not in manner as it did before, nor in common manner of men in highness of voice or by reasonable speaking out; but in full great stillness of voice and softness of heart. For why, his mind is not troubled nor tarried with outward things, but whole gathered together in itself, and the soul is set as it were in a ghostly presence of Jesus; and therefore every word and every syllable is sounded savourly, sweetly and delectably, with full accord of mouth and of heart. For why, the soul is turned then all into fire of love, and therefore every word it privily prayeth is like to a sparkle springing out of a fire, that burneth and chafeth all the mights of the soul, and turneth them into love, and lighteneth them so comfortably that the soul listeth ever to pray and do none other thing. The more it prayeth, the better it may, the mightier it is. For grace helpeth the soul well and maketh all things light and easy, that it list right well to psalm and sing the laudings of God with ghostly mirth in heavenly delight.

This ghostly work is food of the soul, and this prayer is of much virtue. For it wasteth and bringeth to naught all temptations of the fiend, privy and open, it slayeth all the mind and the liking of the world and of fleshly sins, it beareth up the body and the soul from painful feeling of wretchedness of this

life, it keepeth the soul in feeling of grace and working of love, and nourisheth it ever alike hot and fresh, as sticks nourish fire. It putteth away all irking and heaviness of heart, and holdeth it in might and in ghostly gladness. Of this prayer speaketh David thus: *Dressed be my prayer, Lord, as incense in Thy sight.** For right as incense that is cast in the fire maketh sweet smell by the reek ascending up into the air; right so a psalm, savourly and softly sung or said in a burning heart, yieldeth up a sweet smell to the face of our Lord Jesus and to all the court of heaven. There dare no flesh-fly rest upon the pot's brink boiling on the fire; right so there may no fleshly delight rest upon a clean soul, that is wrapped and warmed all in the fire of love, boiling and blowing psalms and laudings to Jesus. This prayer is ever heard of Jesus; it yieldeth grace to Jesus, and receiveth grace again. It maketh a soul homely and fellowly with Jesus, and with all the angels of heaven. Use it whoso may, the work is good and gracious in itself. And though it be not all fully contemplation in itself, nor the working of love by itself, nevertheless it is a part of contemplation. For why, it may not be done on this manner wise save in plenty of grace through opening of the ghostly eyes,

* Ps. cxl 2.

and therefore a soul that hath this freedom and this gracious feeling in prayer, with ghostly savour and heavenly delight, hath the grace of contemplation in manner as it is.

This prayer is a rich offering filled with all fatness of devotion, received by angels and presented to the face of Jesus. The prayer of other men, that are busy in active works, is made of two words. For they ofttimes form in their heart one word through thinking of worldly business, and sound in their mouth another word of the psalm sung or said; yet nevertheless, if their intent be true, their prayer is good and speedful, though it lack savour and sweetness. But this manner offered of a man contemplative is made but of one word. For as it is formed in the heart, right so wholly it soundeth in the mouth, as it were naught but one thing that formeth and soundeth. And soothly no more it is, for the soul through grace is made whole in itself, so far departed from the fleshlihead that it is master of the body; and then is the body naught else, but an instrument and a trump of the soul, in which the soul bloweth sweet notes of ghostly laudings to Jesus.

This is the trump that David speaketh of thus: *Blow ye with the trump in the new moon.** That is, ye souls that are reformed

* Ps. cxxx 3.

in ghostly life, through opening of the ghostly eye, blow ye devoutly, sounding psalms with the trump of your bodily tongue. And therefore, for this prayer is so pleasing to Jesus and so profitable to the soul, then is it good to him that is new turned to God —whatsoever he be that would please Him and coveteth to have some quaint feeling of grace—to covet this feeling, that he might through grace come to this liberty of spirit, and offer his prayers and his psalms to Jesus continually, stably, and devoutly, and have it nearly in custom when grace stir him thereto.

This is a secure feeling and a soothfast. If thou may come thereto and hold it, thou needest not therefore to run about here and there, and ask questions of each ghostly man what thou shalt do, how thou shalt love God and how thou shalt serve God, and speak of ghostly matters that pass thy knowing, as perchance some do. That manner is not full profitable, unless more need make it. Keep thee to thy prayers stiffly, first with travail that thou might come afterwards to this restful feeling of this ghostly prayer, and that shall teach wisdom enough to thee soothfastly without feigning or fantasy. And keep it forth if thou have it, and leave it not; unless grace come otherwise and will reave it from thee for a time, and make thee to work on

another manner; then mayest thou leave it for a time and after turn again thereto. And he that hath this grace in prayer asketh not whereupon he shall set the point of his thought in his prayer, whether upon the words that he saith, or else on God or on the name of Jesus, as some ask. For the feeling of grace teacheth him well enough. For why, the soul is turned into the eyes and sharply beholdeth the face of Jesus, and is made sure that it is Jesus that it feeleth and seeth. I mean not Jesus as He is in Himself in fulness of His blessed Godhead; but I mean Jesus as He will show Him to a clean soul holden in body, after the cleanness that it hath. For wit thou well, every feeling of grace is Jesus and may be called Jesus; and, after that the grace is more or less, so feeleth the soul Jesus more or less. Yea, the first feeling of special grace in a beginner, that is called grace of compunction and contrition for his sins, is verily Jesus. For why, He maketh that contrition in a soul by His presence. But Jesus is then full boisterously and rudely felt, full far from His godly subtlety, for then the soul can no better nor may no better for uncleanness of itself. Nevertheless afterward, if the soul profit and increase in virtues and in cleanness, the same Jesus and none other is seen and felt of the same soul when it is touched with

grace. But that is more ghostly, near to the godly kind of Jesus.

And soothly that is the most thing that Jesus loveth in a soul, that it might be made godly and ghostly in sight and in love, like to Him in grace, to that that He is by kind; for that shall be the end of all lovers. Then mayest thou be sure that which time that thou feelest thy soul stirred by grace, specially in that manner as it is before said, by opening of thy ghostly eye, thou seest and feelest Jesus. Hold Him fast whiles thou may, and keep thee in grace, and let Him not lightly from thee. Look after none other Jesus but that same, by feeling of that self grace more godly, that it might waken in thee more and more; and dread thee not, though that Jesus that thou feelest be not Jesus as He is in His full Godhead, that thou shouldest therefore be deceived if thou leaned to thy feeling. But trust thou well, if thou be a lover of Jesus, that thy feeling is true and that Jesus is truly felt and seen of thee through His grace, as thou mayest see Him here. And therefore lean fully to thy feeling when it is gracious and ghostly, and keep it tenderly and have great dainty, not of thyself, but of it, that thou might see and feel Jesus ever better and better. For grace shall ever teach thee by itself if thou wilt fall thereto, till thou come to the end.

But perchance thou beginnest to wonder why I say one time that grace worketh all this, and another time I say that love worketh, or Jesus worketh. As unto this I say thus, that when I say that grace worketh I mean love, Jesus, and God; for all is one, and naught but one. Jesus is love, Jesus is grace, Jesus is God; and since He worketh all in us by His grace for love as God, therefore may I use what word of these four that me list after my stirring in this writing.

CHAPTER XLIII

HOW A SOUL, THROUGH OPENING OF THE GHOSTLY EYE, RECEIVETH A GRACIOUS LOVE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOLY WRIT: AND HOW JESUS, THAT IS HID IN HOLY WRIT, SHOWETH HIMSELF TO HIS LOVERS

WHEN the soul of a lover feeleth Jesus in prayer in the manner beforesaid, and thinketh that it would never feel otherwise, nevertheless it befalleth that sometime grace putteth silence to vocal praying, and stirreth the soul to see and to feel Jesus in another manner. And that manner is first to see Jesus in Holy Writ; for Jesus, that is all soothfastness, is hid and covered therein, wound in a soft sendal* under fair words, that He may not

* Sendal—*i.e.*, silken stuff.

be known nor felt but of a clean heart. For why, soothfastness will not show itself to enemies, but to friends that love it and desire it with a meek heart. For soothfastness and meekness are full true sisters, fastened together in love and charity; and therefore is there no dividing of counsel betwixt them two. Meekness presumeth on soothfastness, and nothing of itself; and soothfastness troweth well on meekness, and so they accord wonder well. Then forasmuch as a soul of a lover is made meek through inspiration of grace, by opening of the ghostly eye, and seeth that it is naught of itself but only hangeth on the mercy and goodness of Jesus, and lastingly is borne up by favour and help of Him only and truly desiring the presence of Him, therefore seeth it Jesus; for it seeth soothfastness of Holy Writ wonderly showed and opened, above study and travail and reason of man's kindly wit. And that may well be called the feeling and the perceiving of Jesus, for Jesus is the well of wisdom; and, by a little pouring of His wisdom into a clean soul, He maketh the soul wise enough to understand all Holy Writ. Not all at once in special beholding; but through that grace the soul receiveth a new ableness, and a gracious habit to understand it specially when it cometh to mind.

This opening and this clearness of wit is

made by the ghostly presence of Jesus. For right as the Gospel saith of two disciples going to the castle of Emmaus, burning in desire and speaking of Jesus, how our Lord Jesus appeared to them presently in likeness of a pilgrim and taught them the prophecies of Himself, and as the Gospel saith, *opened to them clearness of wit that they might understand Holy Writ*. Right so the ghostly presence of Jesus openeth the wit of His lover that it burneth in desire to Him, and bringeth into his mind by ministration of angels the words and the sentences of Holy Writ, unsought and unadvised, one after another, and expoundeth them readily, be they never so hard nor so privy. The harder that they be and the further from man's reasonable understanding, the more delectable is the true showing of them when Jesus is master. It is expounded and declared literally, morally, mystically and heavenly, if the matter suffer it. By letter, that is lightest and most plain, is bodily kind comforted; by morality of Holy Writ the soul is informed of vices and virtues wisely kenning to depart the one from the other. By mystihead it is illumined to see the works of Jesus in Holy Church, readily to apply the words of Holy Writ to Christ our head and to Holy Church that is His body mystical. And the fourth, that is heavenly, belongeth

only to working of love, and that is when all soothfastness in Holy Writ is applied to love; and because that is most like heavenly feeling, therefore I call it heavenly.

The lover of Jesus is His friend, not because he hath deserved it but because Jesus of His merciful goodness maketh him His friend by true accord; and therefore as to a true friend that pleaseth Him with love, not serveth Him by dread as a thrall, He showeth His privity. Thus he saith Himself to His apostles: *Now I say that ye are my friends; for I make known to you all things that I have heard of My Father.** To a clean soul that hath the palate purified from filth of fleshly love, Holy Writ is lively food and sustenance delectable. It savoureth wondrous sweetly when it is well chewed by ghostly understanding. For why, the spirit of life is hid therein, that quickeneth all the mights of the soul and filleth them full of sweetness of heavenly savour of ghostly delight. But soothly he needeth to have white teeth and sharp and well picked that should bite on this ghostly bread; for fleshly lovers and heretics may not touch the inward flour of it. Their teeth are bloody and full of filth, and therefore they be fasting from feeling of this bread. By teeth are understood the inward wits of the soul, which in fleshly

* John xv 15.

lovers and in heretics be bloody and full of sin and of worldly vanities. They would, and cannot, come by curiosity of their kindly wit to the soothfastness in knowing of Holy Writ, for their wit is corrupt by original sin and actual also, and is not yet healed through grace. And therefore they do but gnaw upon the bark without, speak they never so much thereof; the inly savour within they feel not of. They be not meek, they be not clean to see it; they be not friends to Jesus, and therefore He showeth them not His counsel.

The privity of Holy Writ is closed under a key sealed with a signet of Jesus' finger, that is the Holy Ghost; and therefore without His love and His leave may no man come in. He only hath the key of cunning in His keeping, as Holy Writ saith; and He is key Himself and He letteth in whom He will by inspiration of His grace, and breaketh not the seal. And that doth Jesus to His lovers; not to all alike but to them that are specially inspired to seek soothfastness in Holy Writ, with great devotion in praying and with much business in studying going before. These may come to the finding when our Lord Jesus will show it.

See now therefore how grace openeth the ghostly eye, and cleareth the wit of the soul wonderly above the frailty of corrupt kind; it giveth the soul a new ableness, whether

it will read Holy Writ, or hear or think it, to understand truly and savourly the soothfastness of it in the manner aforesaid, and to turn readily all reasons and words that are bodily said into ghostly understanding. And that is no great marvel, for the same spirit that first made it expoundeth it and declareth it in a clean soul in comfort of it ; and that is the Holy Ghost. And this grace may be and is as well in lewd as in lettered men, as anent the substance of the true feeling of soothfastness and the ghostly savour of it in general; though they see not so many reasons in special, for that needeth not. And when the soul is thus abled and lightened through grace, then it listeth to be alone sometimes, out of letting or communing of all creatures, that it might freely assay its instrument—that I call its reason—in beholding of soothfastness that is contained in Holy Writ. And then there fall to mind words and reasons and sentences enough to occupy the soul in, full ordinately and full sadly.

And what comfort and ghostly delight, savour and sweetness, a soul may feel then in his ghostly work through divers illuminations, inly perceivings, privy knowings and sudden touchings of the Holy Ghost, by assay the soul may wit but not otherwise. And I think that he shall not err, if so be his teeth, that be his inly wits, be kept white

and clean from ghostly pride and from curiosity of kindly wit. David felt full great delight in this manner work when he said thus: *How sweet are Thy speakings, Lord Jesus, to my cheeks, over honey to my mouth.** That is, Lord Jesus, Thy holy words indited in Holy Writ, brought to my mind through grace, are sweeter to my cheeks—that is, to the affections of my soul—than honey is to my mouth. Soothly this is a fair work and an honest, without painful travail, to see Jesus thus.

This is one manner of sight of Jesus as I said before: not as He is, but clothed under likeness of works and of words; *by a mirror and by a likeness*, as the apostle saith.† Jesus is endless might, wisdom and goodness, righteousness, soothfastness, holiness and mercy. And what this Jesus is in Himself may no soul see nor hear. But by effect of His working may He be seen through the light of grace as thus: His might is seen by making all creatures of naught, His wisdom in ordinate disposing of them, His goodness in saving of them, His mercy in forgiveness of sins, His holiness in gifts of grace, His righteousness in hard punishing of sin, His soothfastness in true rewarding of good works. And all this is expressed in Holy Writ, and this seeth a soul in Holy Writ with

* Ps. cxviii 103. † 1 Cor. xiii 12.

all other accidents that fall thereto. And wit thou well that such gracious knowings, in Holy Writ or in other writing that are made through grace, are naught else but letters sent and made betwixt a loving soul and Jesus loved; or else, if I shall say soothlier, betwixt Jesus the true lover and the souls loved of Him. He hath full great tenderness of love to all His chosen children that are here closed in clay of this bodily life; and therefore—though He be absent from them, high hid above in the bosom of the Father, fulfilled in delights of the blessed godhead—nevertheless He thinketh upon them and visiteth them full often through His gracious ghostly presence, and comforteth them by His letters of Holy Writ, and driveth out of their hearts heaviness and weariness, doubts and dreads, and maketh them glad and merry in Him, truly trowing to all His promises, and meekly abiding the fulfilling of His will.

Saint Paul saith thus: *All that is written to our teaching, it is written that, by comfort of writing, we might have hope of salvation.** And this is another work of contemplation, to see Jesus in Scriptures after opening of the ghostly eye. The cleaner the sight is in beholding, the more comforted is the affection in the tasting. A full little savour felt

* Rom. xv 4.

in a clean soul of Holy Writ in this manner beforesaid should make the soul set little price by knowing of all the seven arts, or all the world of all worldly cunnings. For the end of all knowledge is salvation of a man's soul in everlasting life; and the end of that other as for himself is but vanity and a passing delight, unless they be turned through grace to this end.

CHAPTER XLIV

OF THE PRIVY VOICE OF JESUS SOUNDING IN A SOUL, WHEREBY IT SHALL BE KNOWN: AND HOW ALL GRACIOUS ILLUMINATIONS MADE IN A SOUL BE CALLED THE SPEAKINGS OF JESUS

Lo, these are fair new feelings in a clean soul, and if a soul were fulfilled with such, it might be said soothly that it were reformed somewhat in feeling but not yet fully. For why, Jesus showeth yet more, and leadeth the soul inner, and beginneth to speak more homely and more lovely to a soul; and ready is the soul then to follow the stirring of grace. For the prophet saith: *Whither so goeth the spirit, thither goeth the wheels following him.** By wheels are understood true lovers of

* Ezek. i 20.

Jesus, for they are found in virtue without angle of frowardness, and lightly whirling through readiness of will to the stirring of grace. For after that grace stirreth and teacheth, so they follow and work, as the prophet saith. But they have first a full secure assay and a true knowing of the voice of grace, ere they may do so, that they be not deceived by their own feigning or by the midday fiend.

Our Lord Jesus saith thus of His lovers: *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they know Me.** The privy voice of Jesus is full true, and it maketh a soul true. There is no feigning in it nor fantasy, nor pride nor hypocrisy, but softness, meekness, peace, love and charity; and it is full of life, love and grace. And therefore, when it soundeth in a soul, it is of so great might sometimes that the soul suddenly layeth aside all that there is, praying, speaking, reading or thinking in the manner beforesaid, and all manner bodily work, and listeneth thereto fully, hearing and perceiving in rest and in love the sweet sound of this ghostly voice; as it were ravished from the mind of all earthly things. And then sometimes Jesus showeth Himself in this peace as an awful master, and sometimes as a reverent father, and sometimes as a lovely spouse.

* John x 14, 27.

And it keepeth a soul in a wonderful reverence and in a lovely beholding of Him, that the soul liketh well then and never so well as then. For it feeleth so great secureness and so great rest in Jesus, and so much savour of His goodness, that it would ever be so and never do other work. It thinketh that it toucheth Jesus, and through virtue of that unspeakable touching it is made whole and stable in itself, reverently beholding only Jesus, as if there were nothing but Jesus one thing and he another, borne up only by the savour and the wonderful goodness of Him; that is, that thing that he seeth and feeleth.

And this feeling is oftentimes without special beholding of Holy Writ, nor but with few words formed in the heart; not but that, among these, there fall in sweet words according to the feeling, either loving or worshipping or wondering, or otherwise sounding as the heart liketh. The soul is full much departed from love or liking of the world through virtue of this gracious feeling, and also from mind of the world much in the meantime; it taketh none heed thereof, for it hath no time thereto. But then sometime anon with this there fall into a soul divers illuminations through grace, the which illuminations I call speakings of Jesus and the sight of ghostly things. For

wit thou well that all the business that Jesus maketh about a soul is to make it a true perfect spouse to Him in the highness and the fulness of love. And that may not be done suddenly, therefore Jesus—that is love and of all lovers the wisest—assayeth by many wises and by many wonderful means ere it may come about; and therefore, that it might come to an effect of true spousage, He hath such gracious speakings in likeness of a wooer to a chosen soul. He showeth His privy jewels, much thing He giveth and more He promiseth, and courteous dalliance He showeth. Often He visiteth with much grace and ghostly comfort as I before said. But how He doth this in special, all fully can I not tell thee, for it needeth not. Nevertheless somewhat shall I say after that grace stirreth.

The drawing of a soul fully to perfect love is first by the showing of ghostly things to a clean soul, when the ghostly eye is opened; not that a soul should rest therein and make an end there, but by that means should seek Him and love Him only that is highest of all, without any beholding of other thing than Himself. But what are these ghostly things, sayest thou, for I speak often of ghostly things. To this I answer and say, that this ghostly thing may be said to be all soothfastness of Holy Writ. And therefore a soul

that through light of grace may see the soothfastness of it, seeth ghostly things, as I have before said.

CHAPTER XLV

HOW THROUGH GRACIOUS OPENING OF THE GHOSTLY EYE A SOUL IS MADE WISE, MEEKLY AND SOOTHFASTLY, TO SEE THE DIVERSITY OF DEGREES IN HOLY CHURCH AS TRAVAILING, AND TO SEE THE NATURE OF ANGELS. AND FIRST OF FALLEN ANGELS

NEVERTHELESS other ghostly things there be also, the which through light of grace are showed to the soul; and they are these. The kind of all reasonable souls, and the gracious working of our Lord Jesus in them; the kind of angels blessed and reproved, and their working; and the knowing of the blessed Trinity, after that grace teacheth.

Holy Writ saith in the book of songs of the spouse thus: *I shall rise and I shall go about the city, and I shall seek him that my soul loveth.** That is, I shall rise unto highness of thought and go about the city. By this city is understood the universe of all creatures bodily and ghostly, ordained and ruled under God by laws of kind and of grace. I go about this city when I behold

* Cant. iii 2.

the kind and the causes of bodily creatures, the gifts of grace and the blisses of ghostly creatures; and in all these I seek Him whom my soul loveth. It is fair looking with the inner eye on Jesus in bodily creatures to see His might, His wisdom and His goodness in ordinance of their kind, but it is much fairer looking on Jesus in ghostly creatures. First in reasonable souls chosen and reproved, to see the merciful calling of Him to the chosen, how He turneth them from sin by light of His grace; how He helpeth them, teacheth them, chasteneth them, comforteth them; how He righteth, He cleanseth, He feedeth; how He maketh them burning in love and in light by plenty of His grace. And this doth He not to one soul only, but to all His chosen, after measure of His grace. Also of all reproved, how rightfully He forsaketh them and leaveth them in their sins, and doth them no wrong; how He rewardeth them in this world, suffering them to have the fulfilling of their will, and after punisheth them endlessly.

Lo, this is a little beholding of Holy Church, whiles it is in travailing in this life, to see how black and how foul it seemeth in souls that are reproved, how fair and how lovely it is in chosen souls. And this ghostly sight is naught else but the sight of Jesus, not in Himself but in His merciful privy works

and in His righteous dooms, every day showed and remembered and renewed to reasonable souls. Also over this to see with the ghostly eye the pains of reproved and the bliss of chosen souls, it is full comfortable. For soothfastness may not be seen in a clean soul without great delight and wonderful softness of blessed burning love.

Also the sight of angels' kind; first of damned and after that of the blessed. It is a full fair contemplation of the fiend in a clean soul, when grace bringeth the fiend to the sight of the soul as a clumsy caitiff bound with the might of Jesus that he may not hurt any. Then the soul beholdeth him, not bodily but ghostly, seeing his kind and his malice; and turneth him upside down, and spoileth him and rendeth him all to naught, scorneth him and despiseth him, and setteth naught by his malice. Thus biddeth Holy Writ when it saith thus: *Turn the wicked*, that is the fiend, *upside-down, and he shall be as naught.** Much wonder hath the soul that the fiend hath so much malice and so little might. There is no creature so unmighty as he is, and therefore it is a great cowardice that men dread him so much. He may nothing do without leave of our Lord Jesus, not so much as enter into a swine, as the Gospel saith. Much less then may he

* Prov. xii 7.

do to annoy any man. And then if our Lord Jesus give him leave to tarry us, it is full worthily and mercifully done that our Lord Jesus doth, and therefore welcome be our Lord Jesus by Himself and by all His messengers. The soul dreadeth no more then the blustering of the fiend, than the stirring of a mouse. Wondrous wrath is the fiend if it durst say nay, but his mouth is stopped with his own malice, his hands are bound as a thief worthy to be deemed and hanged in hell, and then the soul accuseth him and rightfully deemeth him after that he hath deserved. Wonder not at this saying, for Saint Paul meant the same when he said thus: *Brethren wit ye not well that we shall deem angels*,* that are wicked spirits through malice, that were made good angels by kind, as who saith yes. This deeming is figured before the doom in contemplative souls; for they feel a little tasting in likeness of all that shall be done afterward by our Lord openly in soothfastness.

Shamed and shent† is the fiend greatly in himself, when he fares thus with a clean soul. He would fain flee away and he may not, for the might of the Highest holdeth him still, and that grieveth him more than all the fire of hell. Wondrous meekly falleth

* 1 Cor. vi 3.
† Shent—*i.e.*, disgraced.

the soul to Jesus then, with hearty laudings that He so mightily saveth a simple soul from all malice of so fell an enemy by His great mercy.

CHAPTER XLVI

HOW BY THE SAME LIGHT OF GRACE THE BLESSED ANGELS' NATURE MAY BE SEEN. AND HOW JESUS IS GOD AND MAN ABOVE ALL CREATURES, AFTER THAT WHICH THE SOUL MAY SEE HERE

And then after this, by the same light, may the soul see ghostly the fairhead of angels, the worthiness of them in kind, the subtlety of them in substance, the confirming of them in grace, and the fulness of endless bliss; the sundrihead of orders, the distinctions of persons, how they live all in light of endless soothfastness, and how they burn all in love of the Holy Ghost after the worthiness of orders, how they see and love and praise Jesus in blessed rest without ceasing. There is no sight of body nor no figure in imagination in this manner working, but all ghostly of ghostly creatures.

Then beginneth the soul to have great acquaintance of the blessed spirits, and a great fellowship. They are full tender and full busy about such a soul to help it, they are masters to teach it, and often, through

their ghostly presence and touching of their light, they drive out fantasies from the soul. They illumine the soul graciously, they comfort the soul by sweet words suddenly sounded in a clean heart; and, if any dis-ease fall ghostly, they serve the soul and minister to it all that it needeth. Thus Saint Paul said of them: *Wot ye not well that all holy spirits are ministers, sent of Jesus for them that take the heritage of health.** These are chosen souls. As who saith yes. For wit thou well that all this ghostly working of words and of reasons brought to the mind, and such fair likeness, are made by the ministering of angels, when the light of grace abundantly shineth in a clean soul. It may not be told by tongue, the feelings, the lightenings, the graces and comforts in special, that clean souls perceive through favorable fellowship of blessed angels. The soul is well at ease with them to behold how they do, that it would attend to naught else.

But then, with the help of the angels, the soul seeth yet more. For knowing riseth above all this in a clean soul; and that is to behold the blessed kind of Jesus. First of His blessed manhood, how it is highed worthily above all angels' kind: and then after of His blessed godhead, for by knowing of creatures is known the Creator. And then

* Heb. i 14.

beginneth the soul to perceive a little of the privities of the Blessed Trinity. It may well enough, for light of grace goeth before, and therefore she shall not err as long as she holdeth her with the light.

Then is opened soothfastly to the eye of the soul the onehead in substance and distinction of persons in the Blessed Trinity, as it may be seen here, and much other soothfastness of the Blessed Trinity pertinent to this matter; the which is openly declared and showed by writings of holy doctors of Holy Church. And wit ye well that the self-same soothfastness of the Blessed Trinity, that inspired these holy doctors through grace to write in their books in strengthening of our troth, a clean soul may see and know through the self light of grace. I will not express so much of this matter here specially for it needeth not.

Wondrous great love feeleth the soul with heavenly delight in feeling of this soothfastness, when it is made through special grace; for love and light go both together in a clean soul. There is no love that riseth of knowing and of special beholding that may touch so near our Lord as this love may; for why, this knowing of Jesus God and man is worthiest and highest in itself only, if it be specially showed by the light of grace. And therefore is the fire of love flaming of this more burn-

ing, than it is of knowing of any creature bodily or ghostly. And all these gracious knowings felt in a soul, of the universe of all creatures in manner beforesaid, and of our Lord Jesus maker and keeper of all this fair universe, I call them fair words and sweet speakings of our Lord Jesus to a soul which He would make His true spouse.

He showeth privities and proffereth rich gifts of His treasure, and arrayeth the soul with them full honestly. She need not be ashamed with the company of her fellows to appear afterwards to the face of Jesus her spouse. All this lovely dalliance of privy speech betwixt Jesus and a soul may be called an hid word, of the which Holy Writ saith thus: *Soothly to me is said an hid word, and the veins of his whisperings mine ear hath perceived.** The inspiration of Jesus is an hid word, for it is privily hid from all lovers of the world, and showed to His lovers; through the which a clean soul perceiveth readily the veins of His whisperings, that are specially showings of His soothfastness. For each and every gracious knowing of soothfastness felt with inly savour and ghostly delight, is a privy whisper of Jesus to the ear of a clean soul. It behoveth him to have much cleanness and meekness and all other virtues, and to be half deaf to noise

* Job iv 12.

of worldly jangling, that should wisely perceive these sweet ghostly whisperings. This is the voice of Jesus, of which David saith thus: *The voice of our Lord Jesus assaying the harts, and He shall show the thicket.** That is, the inspiration of Jesus maketh souls light as harts that start from the earth over bushes and briars of all worldly vanity; and He showeth to them the thicket, that is His privities, that may not be perceived but by sharp eyes. These beholdings, soothfastly grounded in grace and in meekness, make a soul wise and burning with desire to the face of Jesus. These are the ghostly things that I spake of before, and they be called new gracious feelings. And I do but touch them a little for wissing† of thy soul. For the soul that is clean stirred by grace to use of this working, may see more in an hour of such ghostly matter, than might be writ in a great book.

Thus finisheth this present book which expoundeth many notable doctrines in contemplation: which are, meseemeth, right expedient to those that set their felicity in occupying themselves specially for their soul's health.

* Ps. xxviii 9.
† Wissing—*i.e.*, showing.

Infinite laud with thankings manifold
I yield to God, me succouring with His grace,
This book to finish, which that ye behold,
Scale of Perfection called in every place.
Whereof the author Walter Hilton was:
And Wynkyn de Worde this hath set in print
In William Caxton's house, so fell the case.
God rest his soul, in joy there mote it stint.

This heavenly book, more precious than gold,
Was late direct with great humility,
For godly pleasure thereon to behold,
Unto the right noble Margaret as ye see,
The king's mother, of excellent bounty,
Henry the seventh, that Jesus him preserve.
This mighty princess hath commanded me
To imprint this book her grace for to deserve.

Finit feliciter liber intitulatus
SCALA PERFECTIONIS
Impressus anno salutis mccccclxxxxiiii.

GLOSSARY

Accidie, sloth.
Adrad, adread, afraid (past participle of M.E. *adraden*, to frighten).
Advisement, deliberation, counsel.
Agryse, agrise, grysing, dread.
Anence, anent, about, concerning.
Anker, anchorite.
Aperte, open, evident.
Appair, harm (form of impair).
Arette, account; *aretted and appropered*, ascribed and appropriated.
Assay, essay, try.
Assone, anon, at once, straightway.
Ayen buying, ransoming.
Ayenstond, withstand, oppose.

Beastly, animally; in a purely physical or animal fashion (McCann).
Behote, behight, promise.
Boisterous, rude, unskilled, rough.
Bolneth, swelleth (M.E. *bolnen*, to swell).
Buxom, docile.

Caitiff, miserable wretch, captive.
Chafe, chaffyd, chauffyd, to warm, warmed.
Charge, heed, care.
Cheer, face, mien, look.
Clergy, clerkship, learning, knowledge.
Cognition, perception.
Cord, accord.
Costrel, barrel, wine-skin.
Cumbereth, cumbren, to encumber, burden.
Cunne, ken, cunning, to know, knowledge, ability.

Dainty, scrupulous, over-particular.
Danger, refusal; *dangerous*, aloof, estranged.
Dareth, lurketh.
Deadly, mortal; *undeadliness*, immortality.
Deem, *doom*, judge, judgement (M.E. *demen*, to judge).
Defoyled, defiled.
Dele, dole, sorrow.
Delices, delights.
Depart, divide.
Depeynte, depict.
Dere, *deren*, to hurt.
Disease, dis-ease, distress.
Doom, *v.* deem.
Dwere, *der*, doubt.

Enchesen, reason, cause (O.F.).
Eschew, afraid (doublet of shy).
Even Christian, fellow-Christian.

Fairhead, beauty.
Farly, *ferly*, opposite of nearly.
Fell, *felly*, *felness*, fierce, severe.
Flemed, cast out (*flemen*, to banish, expel).
Flite, *fliting*, scold, scolding.
Foltes, *folte*, a fool (Piers Ploughman).
Fondings, follies (*fonnen*, p.p. *fonned*, to act foolishly).
Forshapen, misshapen.
Forthink, abandon.
Fulhead, fulness.

Grope, *gropen*, feel, touch.
Grouchings, *grouchest*, grumbling.
Grysing, *v.* agryse.

Happed, wrapped.
Have, behave.
Head, capital.
Helding, sloping.

Hight, called.
Homely, familiar.
Honesty, purity.
Hope, expect (M.E. *hopen*).
Hye, high, to high oneself, to exalt oneself.

Increase, enjoy.
Innerest, innermost.

Keep, taketh no keep, taketh no heed.
Kind, kindly, nature, natural.

Langern, languor.
Lerid, learned.
Lesings, falsehoods.
Let, hinder.
Letterly, literally.
Lewd, ignorant.
Liking, pleasant.
Listy, zestful, joyous.
Lovely, loving.

Manciple, slave, servant (O.F. *mancipe*).
Manly, human.
Mawment, idol.
Meed, meedfully, reward, profitably.
Menged, mixed.
Mights, powers.
Mispaid, v. paid.
Missaying, abuse.
Mistihead, symbolism.
Mistrowing, unbelief.
Molle, dust.
Moten, measured.
Mow, may.

Namely, especially.
Needlings, needly, of necessity (adverb).
Nerehond, nearly.
Noye, noyous, to harm, harmful.

Oned, united.
Onliness, *onlistead*, solitude.
Ordain, arrange.
Overleading, oppression, domination.
Oweth, ought.

Paid, *apaid*, content; *mispaid*, *evil apaid*, ill-content.
Pairing, *impairing*, *v.* appair.
Perceiver, heir.
Privy, *privity*, secret (adj. and noun).
Purchase, acquire, pursue eagerly.
Pursue, follow after, chase, prosecute (M.E. *pursuen*).
Purvey, provide.

Recklessly, heedlessly, carelessly.
Reek, smoke.
Regard, comparison.
Religion, a religious order.
Reproved, *repreved*, reprobate.
Rightwiseness, justice, righteousness.
Rownings, whisperings.

Sad, *sadly*, serious, seriously.
Savour, *to savour*, to perceive by smell or taste, hence to perceive, learn, experience, understand, know, taste with pleasure, delight in, relish.
Sendal, rich silken stuff.
Sere, *seere*, divers, several, many.
Sheding, separating, parting, division.
Shent, disgraced; *shend*, to disgrace, bring to shame.
Sicker, safe, sure, secure.
Silly, happy, innocent, weak.
Skill, reason; *skilful*, reasonable; *unskilful*, unreasonable.
Slander, scandal.
Sleight, slyness, cunning, craft.
Sober, serious, grave.
Somedeal, in some degree.
Soothfastness, truth; *soothfast*, true, genuine.

Sort, lot, destiny.
Sovereign, superior.
Sparkle (noun), diminutive of spark.
Speedful, profitable, advantageous.
Sperred, enclosed (M.E. *sparren*, to bolt, bar).
Spice, obsolete form of species.
Spireth, breatheth; *spiren*, to breathe.
Spousage, espousal.
Stead, place.
Stele, stave.
Stirring, impulse, incitement.
Stoken, shut in.
Sty, upsty, to ascend (M.E. *stien*, to ascend).
Swink, toil.

Tarry, tarrying, vex, vexing (M.E. *tarien*, to irritate, vex).
Toom, tome, void, empty.
Travail, work, labour.
Troth, untroth, faith, unbelief.
Twining, difference.

Uggen, to dread (cp. ugly).
Umbe, obsolete prefix meaning about.
Umbelapped, unbelapped, surrounded; *umbeclipped* (Latin *circumlabit*).
Uncouth, unknown, strange.
Unmade, uncreated.
Unnethe, uneath, scarcely, hardly.
Unnoteful, needless.
Unseableness, unseable, invisibility, invisible.
Unskilful, v. skill.
Untime, an unseasonable time (A.S. *untima*).
Upstying, v. sty.

Wary, waryd, to curse, cursed.
Ween, suppose, think (M.E. *wenen*).
Weir, weer, doubt, distrust.
Were, to wax.

GLOSSARY

Wissen, to show.
Wits, senses.
Wittily, wisely.
Woon, won, to dwell (M.E. *wonen*).
Worship, reverence.

Yard, garden.
Yshed, poured out.

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The Scale of Perfection

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